Retail Pharmacy Assistant

11332B

Successful selling in pharmacy •
Details of medications described were correct when this unit was first written. When recommending products you are not familiar with check with your pharmacist.

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Creative Selling

The security of your employment depends upon the prosperity of your employer’s business. You, as the person dealing with customers at the counter (and customers are the lifeblood of any business), have a great deal of responsibility not only to retain existing customers but also to assist in gaining new ones. Contact with customers is the pivot of the whole retailing process, but it must not be imagined that retail selling is complicated or difficult.

Salesmanship is needed in all shops, but not all shops require the salesmanship of the ‘do or die’ type. We certainly do not require that type of selling in the retail pharmacy; there is no room whatsoever for high-pressure selling in our business. What is wanted is a skilful and subtle guidance of the customer to the most suitable article within her means, thus securing her future patronage. This is the key to the whole question, as the primary object of retail salesmanship in Pharmacy is to create goodwill. We are prepared to lose a sale but keep the customer, rather than make the sale and lose the customer.

In essence, retail salesmanship in Pharmacy is mainly a matter of common sense and courtesy. It is not a mechanical process depending upon the application of elaborate rules and techniques. Moreover, while there are broad lines of conduct upon which success is based, salesmanship in Pharmacy relies upon a genuine liking for people and the ability to put oneself in the customer’s place. This is a fact that must not be forgotten while you hold the position of Pharmacy Assistant.

There are two types of selling: simple selling and creative selling.

- Simple selling is the exchange of money for goods and the exchange of goods for money. This is the normal transaction that occurs daily in all types of retail establishments. If you have the money and we have the goods, a pure and simple exchange will see you with the goods and us with the money.

- Creative selling is the ability to originate and successfully close a sale where no apparent desire to buy previously existed. Creative selling is really what a Pharmacy Assistant is paid to do. But before you conclude that creative selling is a form of high-pressure selling, let us make absolutely certain that you understand the full meaning of creative selling, after all, we are talking about your job definition.

Let us assume, for example, that you are trying to help a customer choose a lipstick. You will find that selling lipsticks is often a fairly lengthy
process, as people tend to find it difficult to choose the right shade. Let us also assume that your customer coughs a lot while you are discussing the various shades of lipstick that are likely to be suitable for her complexion. She can hardly speak to you for more than 30 seconds at a time without breaking into a very harsh, nagging cough. How would you apply creative selling to this situation?

To sell creatively, you must, during your discussions about the various shades of lipsticks, mention that you have noticed she is suffering from this nasty cough. This can easily be done by just saying to your customer, ‘You seem to have a very bad cough. Are you taking something for it?’

Please note the words that were used: ‘Are you taking something for it?’ At this stage all you have done is ask a simple question. You have not tried to sell a cough mixture to that customer on a high-pressure level; all you have done is fulfil your obligation to your customer as a Pharmacy Assistant by making her realise that you are concerned about her cough. You have shown a willingness to help. Now, if the customer’s reply is, ‘It is a bad cough. I’m not taking anything for it at the moment,’ then you as the Pharmacy Assistant could continue your discussion with the customer by simply saying, ‘After we have finished with your lipstick requirements, Mrs Jones, we might be able to help you.’

At the conclusion of the lipstick transaction – you should return to the subject of the harsh, nagging cough. You can do that in this fashion: ‘About that cough, Mrs Jones, if you care to tell me a bit more about it, I might be able to help you, or would you rather see the pharmacist?’ Grateful for your concern, she may then purchase a cough mixture.

Note what has happened in the situation:

1. The customer came in to buy a lipstick.
2. The customer purchased her lipstick.
3. The customer also purchased the cough mixture.

Lipsticks and cough mixtures are not related in any way. What you have done is use creative selling. By listening, you found a hidden need in the customer for a cough remedy. Through your ability as a Pharmacy Assistant you created a desire in the customer for a cough mixture and you proceeded to close the sale successfully, even though there was no apparent desire when she first walked into your pharmacy to even consider the purchase of a cough mixture.
The most important part of this exercise is not the fact that you sold the cough mixture in addition to selling the lipstick, but, rather, the reason you did sell the cough mixture: because the customer needed it, and needed it right there and then.

So, creative selling is not used to make more sales without any real purpose; it is used to sell products that customers need but would not have bought unless they were reminded by the Pharmacy Assistant. In this way the Pharmacy Assistant is really being paid to think for other people, and in many cases she is paid to help people in spite of themselves.

Just imagine for a minute exactly the same situation arising in a department store at the cosmetic counter. In that environment, would anyone be expected to care about the customer’s cough? Of course not. They are not Pharmacy Assistants. The woman could have coughed herself hoarse and, quite possibly, no one would have shown concern about that cough or offered to assist her. This is the great difference between department stores, chain stores, supermarkets, and your pharmacy.

The application of creative selling was aimed at fulfilling a very real need in the customer, even though the customer herself did not ask for a cough mixture. She needed prompting and that is what you did. The sale that was made was naturally an additional sale for the pharmacy, but, more importantly, it was made because the customer needed the product. The sound of the cash register does not only suggest that more money is now in the drawer, it also indicates that a customer’s needs have been satisfied and that you have made her life a little easier and a little healthier.

Creative selling is the ability to originate and successfully close a sale where no apparent desire previously existed. This is exactly what the successful Pharmacy Assistant has to do, for otherwise she is just a people-server. Whenever customers come into the pharmacy to purchase items, it is up to you, the Pharmacy Assistant, to dig out the hidden needs to help them purchase other goods.

The only way to sell creatively is to follow a series of steps that you have to learn and implement in your daily duties as a Pharmacy Assistant:

1. Sell to a plan.
2. Know your product.
3. Tell a planned sales story.
4. Understand your customer.
5. Appeal to human desires.
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6. Make use of the buying motives.
7. Analyse your customer.
8. Sell by suggestion.
9. Use showmanship in your selling.
10. Overcome objections.
11. Close the sale.

By the time you have completed this text you will be capable of giving creative service in your pharmacy. Service is synonymous with selling. We only sell to serve, and not serve to sell, so whenever the word selling appears, it will clearly mean service. Creative service and creative selling mean the same thing as long as you are working in a retail pharmacy.

Sell to a Plan

In your position as a Pharmacy Assistant, most of the sales you make will be through your recommendation of a product to satisfy a customer need.

For you to have a position in a pharmacy, and for there to be a pharmacy, there must be customers. What brings customers to a pharmacy? Customers come because they have needs. There are two types of needs that bring customers to a pharmacy: the known need and the general need.

An example of a known need occurs when a customer knows which product she wants, so she comes into your pharmacy and asks for the product by name. Another very common example is the prescription. The customer is given a prescription by her doctor and she brings it to your pharmacy to be dispensed by your chemist. Yet another example of a known need could be any item that your customer knows is stocked by your pharmacy, or any item that the customer is conversant with. These needs are easily satisfied by products from your pharmacy.

A general need is quite different from a known need. A general need can be seen in a situation where a customer comes to you and is not quite sure what product she requires. This could concern any aspect of Pharmacy, from cosmetics to contraceptives. An example of a general need can be seen when a customer walks into your pharmacy, approaches you, and says, ‘I have a very bad cough. Could you help me, please?’ At this stage all you know is that the customer has a very bad cough. Is that enough
information for you to be able to recommend the right product for the right need? Obviously, it isn’t. It is a general need, as at this stage you don’t know enough about the type of cough that your customer has to be able to recommend a product.

In the treatment of coughs we encounter two basic types: the wet cough and the dry cough. The wet cough is also known as the productive cough. This means that there is phlegm on the chest and that the action of coughing loosens the phlegm in order to get rid of it. Conversely, the dry cough is normally a harsh, nagging, continuous cough which can also be termed the unproductive cough. This sort of cough should be stopped. Until such time as you find out whether your customer has a wet or dry cough, you are in no position to recommend any product and, at this early stage in your discussion, the customer’s present need is a general need.

Another example that illustrates a general need is the customer who requests a pain reliever to treat a headache. There are many different reasons for a headache and, once again, until such time as you know the cause of that headache, you are not really in any position to recommend the ideal product. At that stage, the request for an analgesic for the headache is also a general need.

Let us go back to the known need. Because it is a need that is easily filled, all you require is the particular product that the customer has requested. After ensuring that the customer is getting the service that he or she really needs, you can bring the transaction quickly to its conclusion. If it is a prescription that is needed, it is a well-known need and obviously once you hand the prescription to your chemist and the item is dispensed correctly, the transaction is very easily completed.

The general need, though, needs a bit more work. You cannot fulfil this need until you find out exactly what the problem really is, and the only way to do that is, of course, to ask questions. By asking questions, you can turn the general need into a known need. Using your customer who came in for the treatment of a cough as an example, you can ask such questions as: What type of cough is it? Is it a harsh, nagging cough that keeps bothering you? Or is it a cough that is loosening phlegm? Your client’s answers to your questions will turn a general need into a known need. You can then fill this need by identifying the type of cough mixture that is needed. Then, through the knowledge you have of the products available for cough and cold remedies, you can select the right cough mixture and recommend it. When you recommend a product you must be able to do so with confidence. This means that your product knowledge must be thorough so that you can recommend the right product to your customer with confidence.
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Recommending a Product

Why does a Pharmacy Assistant recommend a product in the pharmacy? There are four reasons for recommending a product:

1. It must be effective.
2. It must be safe to use.
3. It must offer value to the customer.
4. It must be ‘pharmacy-only.’

Before you recommend any product, ask yourself these questions of the product: Is it effective? Is it safe? Is it value for money? Is it chemist-only? If your answer is ‘Yes’ to each one of those questions, then you can, without hesitation, recommend that product to your customer, for you know that the product is the right one for the customer and, just as importantly, that the customer will return to receive the same high level of professional service you have given in the past.

Effective

The first reason for recommending any product is your certainty that the product is effective for the condition it aims to treat. You will know if it is effective for a particular condition by checking its composition and its use, which can easily be found by reading the label on the packet or the bottle.

The law in Pharmacy specifies that the product label must tell us:

1. What the product is used for.
2. The ingredients.
3. The recommended dosage or application.

It is, therefore, simple enough for you to find out whether you have selected the right product for the right condition. With this sort of information you can recommend a product to your customer, knowing that it is effective for her specific needs.

Safe to Use

The second reason for recommending a product is that it is safe to use. Many a drug can be very effective but hardly safe to use. Examples of such drugs are the highly dangerous substances arsenic and strychnine, which could be said to be ‘effective’ in the treatment of any condition from
a simple headache to cancer. You could always assure your customer that a good dose of either of those drugs would ensure that she would never suffer with that condition again – but only because those two drugs are fatal if taken in high doses. The last thing we want to do is kill off our customers! So, safety is just as important a factor in recommending a product as effectiveness.

How can you make sure a product is safe for your customer’s use? The dosage of a product is a very important part of the effectiveness of that product. An overdose could be dangerous and an underdose would not be sufficiently effective. The dosage is printed on the label of each product and this information should be brought to the notice of the customer. The dosage should be clearly explained so that no mistakes are likely to occur. Dosages are normally broken into two categories: the dosage for adults and the dosage for children. Age groups are specified and you must be absolutely certain that the customer understands these fully. If the correct dosage is taken, the product will be safe to use.

Some products are also labelled ‘Caution.’ The word ‘Caution’ will always be found in a prominent position on the label. Whenever ‘Caution’ appears, there is an explanation of what the caution is all about, which must be brought to the notice of your customer. For example, you could explain that the product ‘could cause drowsiness.’ It would then be important for your customer to understand that, while taking this product, she should not drive a car.

Other cautionary statements may suggest that if the customer suffers with any heart condition or high blood pressure, or if she is taking any other type of medication, she should not take this product without medical advice. It’s up to you, the Pharmacy Assistant, to bring these points to the notice of your customer, and the best way to do so would be to point to the ‘Caution’ statement on the label and ask your customer to read it. By pointing out the correct dosage and by bringing the ‘Caution’ notice to the attention of your customers, you are doing everything you can to make sure the product is not only effective, but also safe to use.

When you recommend products that are effective and safe, the customer will gain more confidence in you as a Pharmacy Assistant. That customer will also improve the reputation of your pharmacy by telling her friends that a great amount of care is taken when products are recommended, and that the products are always safe and effective when taken as advised.

Good Value

The third reason for recommending a product is its price. You must look at price from the customer’s point of view. You have often been a customer your-
self and have probably looked for something that you could afford which was also good value. Your customers are no different from you when you are on the opposite side of the counter. You must give value to your customers and the product must be value for money if you are to recommend it. You can explain a product’s value and the price that is asked for it by using your all-essential product knowledge.

In Pharmacy, value does not come just in dollars and cents, but also in how much information you can give your customer about the product selected. If you do not have this product knowledge you cannot justify the price of the product. In addition, by explaining to your customer how the product is effective, and by ensuring the safe use of that product, you have really given her value for money.

This sort of service, of course, is only available in a pharmacy, for if you bought a cough mixture from a grocer or in a supermarket, no one on the staff would be expected to explain effectiveness and safety. Not only are they not expected to do so, but neither are they capable of doing so, for they are not Pharmacy Assistants. This service that is given in a pharmacy makes it the right place for people to buy medicine.

Chemist-only

The fourth reason for recommending a product is that it is ‘pharmacy-only.’

A pharmacy-only product is the type of product that is only available from a pharmacy, and nowhere else. By recommending products that are only available in a pharmacy, you are ensuring future business. If such a product is recommended, when the customer requires an additional supply at a future date she must return to your pharmacy or another pharmacy to obtain it. Future business is your insurance. Without customers, there would be no need for Pharmacy Assistants, nor would there be any need for pharmacies.

Another important reason to recommend pharmacy-only products is to develop the habit customer. If a person has to keep returning to your pharmacy for products to fill her needs, over a period of time she becomes an habitual visitor to your shop. If you had a great number of such habit customers, very probably the future of the pharmacy and the security of your position would be assured. Pharmacy-only products are always of the highest quality and can only be placed on pharmacy shelves after their effectiveness and their safety have been proved beyond any reasonable doubt. So, not only do you recommend these products for the reason that they will bring people back to your pharmacy, but also because of their
effectiveness and their safety, allowing you to recommend them with all 
the confidence in the world.

Know Your Product

Product knowledge is the key to success in a Pharmacy. Without it the 
Pharmacy Assistant can only be a ‘people-server,’ and of little value to 
a pharmacy. As a Pharmacy Assistant, you are fully responsible to yourself 
for the amount of knowledge you gain.

It is impossible for anyone to have a comprehensive knowledge of all 
the multitude of products that are kept in a pharmacy. The average 
pharmacy would have in the vicinity of 20 000 to 25 000 products on its 
shelves. Any Pharmacy Assistant would have to be an absolute genius 
to know about all these products. The amount of knowledge she does 
have is always directly proportional to the interest she has in her work as 
a Pharmacy Assistant.

Unlike school, when you work in a pharmacy, no homework is set on 
product knowledge. Unlike school, there is no teacher to assist and guide 
you. Once you are behind that counter as a Pharmacy Assistant, you have 
to stand on your own two feet. Product knowledge will not come to you; 
you must seek it. There will be quiet times in your working day and these 
moments should be used for learning more about the products in your 
pharmacy and more about the people you serve.

Opportunity to gain knowledge is all around you. Information is given 
on the labels of products on the shelves, so if you are willing to read, 
product knowledge is not hard to obtain. The hardest thing to do is to 
use those quiet moments to improve your knowledge. A common sight 
in a pharmacy is girls grouped behind the counter talking to each other, 
probably about what they did the night before or about the latest movie 
or fashion trend. While this is rather a pleasant pastime, it is certainly not 
going to help you become better equipped as a Pharmacy Assistant. Do 
not misunderstand what is required of you; no one is suggesting that you 
should not be friendly toward your fellow Pharmacy Assistants. What is 
required, though, is that the best part of whatever time you have free is 
spent in improving your ability as a Pharmacy Assistant.

The more products you know about, the more you can offer your 
customers. The more knowledgeable you become, the more interesting 
your job will be. The more people you serve and the more products you 
sell, the more secure your job will become. Product knowledge is in your 
hands and no one else’s. You can study or not study; you can improve or 
not improve.
There are four ways to obtain product knowledge:

1. From the pharmacist
2. From representatives and literature
3. By dusting the shelves
4. From reference books.

Pharmacist

Your pharmacist works with you daily. You will probably see more of him than you see of your own family and friends. The pharmacist is very interested in your success, for your success will lead to the success of the pharmacy. If at any time you are seeking information about a product, do not hesitate to ask your pharmacist. He will be only too glad to explain a product to you. If the pharmacist does not have the time to explain immediately, don’t assume he is brushing you off. The mere fact that you have asked him to help you will make him realise that he has at least one interested member of staff who is trying to improve her product knowledge to be able to increase her effectiveness in the business. This first method of obtaining product knowledge is certainly not hard. All you have to do is ask someone else. It might take a little effort to do so, but the result is well worth the effort. Never hesitate to ask your pharmacist to assist you with your product knowledge.

Representatives and their Literature

Representatives from the various pharmaceutical manufacturers regularly visit pharmacies. Their purpose is to see the pharmacist and advise him of the activities of various branches of the medical profession that could influence his dispensary stock. Also, on their regular calls they discuss with your pharmacist the various products that are being promoted by their respective companies. They may also offer the pharmacist incentives to purchase larger quantities of their products. During these calls, they also advise the pharmacist of any new products that their company will be launching in the near future.

A representative will usually take an order from the pharmacist for over-the-counter products. Because over-the-counter products – often termed ‘O.T.C. products’ – are those items the Pharmacy Assistant handles and sells daily, it is imperative that pharmacy staff be involved in any discussions relative to such an order. Even though the pharmacist is the one who decides whether to buy new or additional stock and is likely
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to place the order himself, he will not be selling the bulk of these products. The Pharmacy Assistant is the sales assistant in the pharmacy and will deal with at least 80 per cent of all customers who walk into the shop. Unless the Pharmacy Assistant is told about the order that is likely to be arriving, about the products in that order, and more importantly, about the various selling points relative to those products, then obviously while the stock is bought with good intention by the chemist, it certainly will not be sold by that pharmacy.

Representatives are normally directed by their companies to spend as much time as possible with Pharmacy Assistants to impart to them a thorough knowledge of the products their company produces. Representatives tend to fail the Pharmacy Assistant in this respect, but one cannot blame the representatives entirely for this lack of communication. Pharmacists are partly to blame for the lack of attention that representatives give pharmacy staff. The reason for this problem is that pharmacists and representatives have, over the years, indulged in what can be called a cold war. You will often hear a pharmacist say, as a representative comes into his shop, ‘Oh, no. You’re the fourteenth representative I’ve seen today. I’m sick and tired of the sight of you fellows. You don’t give me enough time to do my work.’ When a representative is greeted in such a manner, he obviously tries to perform his duties in the pharmacy as quickly as he possibly can in order to remain on friendlier terms with the pharmacist. This certainly does not help the Pharmacy Assistant.

The representative is a specialist in his company’s products. He does not need to learn 20 000 to 25 000 products. He is concerned only with the products that his company manufactures, and his major interests are the few products that your pharmacy purchases from his company. Because he does not have a long list of products to learn, he may be regarded as a specialist in the products that his company makes for Pharmacy. He should, if he is worthy of the name representative, even know as much about those products as any chemist is expected to know. Here is a source of valuable information to a Pharmacy Assistant, a source that comes regularly into your shop. Representatives call approximately every four to six weeks, yet many Pharmacy Assistants and chemists never use these sources of information to better their own product knowledge – and their selling ability.

If your pharmacist does not invite the representative to talk to you about products that are stocked by your pharmacy, and if the representative does not take the time to bring to your notice something about the products that will help you sell them to your customers, then you will have to take the initiative yourself. Do not stand back and watch representatives come into your pharmacy and then walk out again, with your only contact
being a cheerful ‘Hello!’ and a friendly ‘Goodbye!’ You are not there to watch a passing parade.

If you are not serving a customer, take the initiative to ask the representatives, when they have concluded their business and are ready to leave, to tell you something about the products their company has in your shop. If you make use of these representatives, perhaps asking them to leave some literature relative to the products that you are selling, then calls by representatives will fulfil the necessary obligation these companies have to you, the Pharmacy Assistant, in giving you the product knowledge that will help you to present the right product for the right need to the right customer.

Once again, this second method of obtaining product knowledge is just as easy as the first method. All you have to do is ask. This time instead of asking the senior girl or the pharmacist in your pharmacy, you ask the representative, and also read the literature that he leaves with you. It is the only effort that is needed, in this instance, to obtain product knowledge.

Once a representative realises that you are genuinely interested in his products, he will make a special effort on every call to your pharmacy to speak to you further about the various products that his company manufactures, for if you sell more of those products it is very obvious that your pharmacist is going to buy more of them from the representative. And to a representative, orders mean commission. So here is another person very interested in helping you.

What’s more, everyone will gain by this experience. Your knowledge of the products will grow and you will sell more of them for your pharmacist; he will make a larger profit; the representative will gain increased orders from your pharmacist; he will earn more commission And you, the Pharmacy Assistant, will have greater job security by becoming a very important part of the profit-making business of your pharmacy.

Dusting Shelves

Dusting shelves is a task most Pharmacy Assistants dislike immensely. Perhaps it reminds them a little bit of the household chores that Mum or Dad might have asked them to perform. You can rest assured that, if you are the most recent addition to your pharmacy, dusting the shelves is going to be one of your daily duties for quite some time.
In the old days, when a pharmacist gave a girl a duster and asked her to dust the shelves, he would give valid reasons why this work was so important to him as well as to her. He might have said to her:

“Keeping the shelves dusted is one of your duties. It may not seem important, but keeping display items clean not only makes them look more appealing, it also gives you an opportunity to learn the layout. Pick products off the shelves and read the labels; that way you will gain the product knowledge that will prove invaluable when you’re serving customers.”

In those days, a pharmacist had the time to discuss such matters with his Pharmacy Assistant and give her explanations when he asked her to dust the shelves. These days, he might not have the time to give his reasons so fully. And so we might see Pharmacy Assistants dusting shelves with their eyes closed.

When you are dusting shelves please look at every item you are dusting. Remember where the products are, so that you can give prompt service to your customers. You will also start to feel more at home in those four walls that will enclose you daily. In addition, you will see what stock there is in the pharmacy, and the quantities of each individual product. Do stop dusting your shelves when you see a lot of one product. Pick up that product and read the label, front and back. You will soon start to learn the products.

This turns a menial task, an unrewarding piece of work, into a great source of product knowledge.

No chemist in his right senses, if he ever sees you stop dusting for a minute to read the label on a product, is likely to come racing out of his dispensary cracking a big whip and yelling at the top of his voice, ‘Keep dusting!’ A chemist knows only too well that your success is his success, and if he notices anything at all, he will be glad that you are showing so much interest in your work. Then he himself might go out of his way to assist you more often in learning about products because you have shown genuine interest in doing your job well.

The third method of obtaining product knowledge has, if anything, made an unpleasant task much more rewarding; it makes dusting an interesting job rather than a meaningless chore.
Reference Books

In every pharmacy there are at least two publications which can contain product knowledge:

1. Martindale – The Extra Pharmacopoeia


These two publications are obviously kept in the dispensary, mainly because there is no other place the pharmacist can keep them. In addition, he himself needs to refer to these publications quite regularly.

The Martindale book discusses individual drugs rather than products. Obviously, the chemist has more use for this publication than does the Pharmacy Assistant; however, we include it as a reference for those who wish to know about the chemical constituents of the products they are selling.

The P.P. Guide is the Pharmacy Assistant’s bible. This book is an alphabetical list of products that may be found in the pharmacy. The information you can gather by looking up a product in this publication is enough to assist you in presenting the product to your customers. In this book you will find the name of the product, what it contains, what it is used for, the various sizes of packaging available, and the company that manufactures it. The only relevant piece of information you cannot obtain from this book is the price of the product, which changes too often for any figure to be of value.

The P.P. Guide is useful for everyone who works in a pharmacy. It is a reference book that can be used any time you are seeking knowledge about a particular product. We are not suggesting that you walk straight into your pharmacist’s dispensary, grab the book, and take it home with you, but if you want to learn about a product, do ask your pharmacist whether you could borrow the book for a little while as you are seeking information about a certain product. The pharmacist will be delighted to lend you the publication, and he might even explain some of the terms that you do not understand. What is more important, though, is that, by the mere fact you have asked for this publication, he will once again realise you are interested in learning, and if business does not go as well as it should, then the people who have shown an interest in learning are likely to be the last ones to be retrenched.
A Final Word of Warning

You must always be aware of the limitations of your own knowledge, and you must work within these limits. As a Pharmacy Assistant, you are in a position of great responsibility, both to the public and to your employer. You must never sell medicine to a customer because you think it will be all right. Never make a guess at the usage or dosage of any article you are selling.

If you are not absolutely certain on a point, ask your pharmacist. He has acquired his knowledge and experience over a period of years and by way of much hard study. You cannot expect to possess his knowledge. For one thing, you do not have the necessary background or scientific training. You must, therefore, use the knowledge you acquire with great care and only as an aid to sales. If in any doubt at all, always consult your chemist. Remember the saying, ‘A little learning is a dangerous thing,’ and don’t get out of your depth. Remember also that you are not a consulting pharmacist; you are the Pharmacy Assistant, and you have a very important job to perform in that function alone.

Tell a Planned Sales Story

There are two types of sales stories: one is the canned sales story, the other is the planned sales story.

The canned sales story is learned by heart and pours out as a mechanical process. The danger of learning something by heart is that, once interrupted, you have to start again from the beginning, and interruptions in a pharmacy occur quite frequently. Just imagine the situation if you were interrupted three or four times while discussing a product with your customer, and the only way you could continue your discussion was to start from the beginning over and over again. The customer would soon detect that you didn’t really know what you were talking about, that you had learned your sales patter by heart. This would not make the customer feel confidence in you, which almost always leads to the loss of a sale. It would also be very embarrassing for you to have to stop and go back to the beginning three or four times in a row.

Another danger in the canned sales story presentation is that it does not allow you the flexibility to tailor your sales story to suit your customer. Flexibility is required to be able to discuss a product’s selling points in their order of priority as seen by the customer. We cannot always present sales points in the order we prefer; we must tell the story the way the customer wants to hear it and a canned sales story does not allow this flexibility.
The canned sales story is of no value to you, the Pharmacy Assistant. Before long, you will get bored with saying the same thing over and over again in exactly the same manner. This, in turn, will make you lose your enthusiasm for the products you are selling, and once enthusiasm is lost from your presentation, the customer can sense it immediately. If you do not feel enthusiastic about your products, how can you expect your customers to feel enthusiastic about accepting what you are proposing? So, forget the canned sales story. It might be the easiest way of remembering something, but it is certainly not the best way of selling your products.

In the planned sales story you work to a definite pattern of sales talk, but it must be an easy and natural pattern, and not a mechanical process.

It must also be planned in such a way that it allows for interruptions and, in spite of such interruptions, it permits you to continue with your sales story without hesitation.

A planned sales story should contain nothing but information which will be of interest to the customer. The following four points will provide such information in a planned way:

1. The name of the product
2. The composition of the product
3. The indications
4. The price.

By discussing these four points as individual facts rather than giving a parrot-fashion presentation, you can maintain an easy flow of words regardless of the interruptions that might occur throughout your presentation to a client. By not straying from the four points, you will be able to present the product to your customer in approximately 30 to 35 seconds, regardless of how complicated the formulation of that product might be. One of the objectives of good service these days is to be able to present a product in a short time without missing any points that are of interest to your customer. In other words, the presentation must be short and to the point, and must contain only what is required to interest the customer in the product you are offering.

Anything else would be a waste of words and time. The longer the presentation, the greater the danger that the customer will lose interest in what you are saying. It could sound like one of those very long, shaggy-dog stories that continue for so long that you have lost interest well before the conclusion.
The planned sales story is also designed to assist you in presenting the product by reading what is on the label. Quite often all the information you require to interest your customer in the product is printed somewhere on the packaging.

The name of the product is obviously on the front of the package. The composition can always be found on the front or back label; composition means the drugs that the product contains.

The word *indications* means the conditions this product will treat. These conditions are always found on the label of the package, so there is no problem in obtaining this information. The price is also easily found as every product in a pharmacy bears a price sticker.

At this stage, let us make it quite clear that Pharmacy Assistants are not expected to remember long, complicated pharmaceutical terms or the names of the various drugs that make up any product. If you presented a product’s composition by simply telling the customer the names of the various drugs that make up this product, it would not make any sense to her whatsoever. So when you talk about the composition of a product, what is really important is what these drugs do, rather than the way they are pronounced. The customer is more interested in how this product is going to affect her. She is not impressed by difficult words, but she would be impressed if you said, for example, ‘There is an ingredient in this product that will stop your cough,’ or ‘The anaesthetic action of this product will soothe the pain in your throat.’

These are words anyone can understand; they can persuade your customers to listen to whatever else you have to say about the product. You may become highly technical in your presentation to customers by using pharmaceutical language, but they are likely to leave your pharmacy and go looking for another pharmacy where they will find a sign on the door saying ‘English Spoken Here.’

Even though the four points necessary for the planned sales story are obtained by just looking at the packaging, knowing what to select from all the printed matter on both front and back labels is the key to the planned sales story.

Here is an example of how it can be used in the presentation of a multivitamin/mineral preparation, one of the most complicated formulas that you are likely to come across in your work as a Pharmacy Assistant. The formula for such a product could contain anything up to 25 different ingredients. Applying the planned sales story to such a product, your sales presentation to a customer could be as follows:
‘For the condition you have just described to me, Mrs Jones, I can strongly recommend this multivitamin/mineral preparation. It is very effective in the treatment of this feeling of tiredness and lassitude that you have mentioned. It contains all the necessary vitamins and minerals needed to sustain you throughout the day. By taking one of these capsules daily for one month, you will feel a different person. The price of this preparation is $3.90. It will actually cost you 9 cents per day to feel better and, you must admit, that is not a very high price to pay.’

The four points were well and truly covered in that short but concise presentation, which told the customer all she wanted to know about the product. There was no need to go through the various ingredients that make up the multivitamin preparation. If you had done that, the presentation would have been so long that the customer would have become bored with it long before you had completed what you needed to say. You did not confuse the customer by mentioning the names of the various vitamins that make up this preparation. It would not have influenced her any more or any less if you had gone into the many uses of each particular vitamin. Her major concern was her feeling of tiredness. In less than 30 seconds, using language she understands, you told her how she can feel a lot better.

This is the simplicity of the planned sales story. It contains relevant information, and it is up to you, the Pharmacy Assistant, to explain a product in simple English. The simpler the presentation is, the more success you will achieve.

The only way you will become proficient in using the planned sales story is to practise. When you look at a product, perhaps when you are dusting shelves, remember the four points that are required in composing a planned sales story. Plan it before the customer arrives and be sure that you are familiar with the position of this information on the packaging. Before long, by continually looking for such information on various packages, you will become such an expert at this type of presentation that the customer will be convinced that you know whatever product you are presenting like the back of your hand, while all the time you are just reading what is written on the package. The ease with which you perform this task will depend on the time you spend practising your presentation.

A planned sales story can sound easy and convincing when told by a professional Pharmacy Assistant. A professional is a person who has achieved a very high degree of efficiency in whatever field he or she has chosen but still strives to improve even further. You, the Pharmacy Assistant, must be that type of person, so practise continually to improve your presentation of the planned sales story.
Checkpoint Questions One

- Please write your answers in the spaces provided.
- Check your answers at the end of this study unit.
- If you have any incorrect answers, go back and review the relevant sections in this chapter.

1) Name the two types of selling.
   A. 
   B. 

2) Explain the difference between a general need and a known need.
   
   
   
   

3) What information does a product label provide?
   A. 
   B. 
   C. 

4) What is a chemist-only product?
   
   
   
   

5) Name four ways in which product knowledge can be gained.
   A. 
   B. 
   C. 
   D. 
6) Which four points should be remembered when telling a planned sales story?
A. 
B. 
C. 
D. 
Understand Your Customer

A pharmacy, as we have said many times, is a highly personalised type of business. In this sort of atmosphere the service you give your customers must be on a person-to-person basis, rather than sales assistant to customer. You, the Pharmacy Assistant, must treat your customers as human beings and not as prospects. You have to remember that they want the same things out of life as you do. To do this, you must learn to adapt your approach, your sales story, and any other aspects of selling to suit the type of customer you are serving. Adaptation to the individual is the first step towards personalising one’s business. You must learn more and more about people, and understand them as you would understand your friends and relatives.

We can well ask, what is Pharmacy’s real business? Is it products, or is it people? Obviously, Pharmacy’s business is people. You have to understand your customers, their moods, their wants, their likes, and their dislikes, and even how to talk to them. They must have confidence in you, and you as the Pharmacy Assistant must make them believe that you are good at your job. It is not how good you think you are that counts, but how good the customer thinks you are.

In order to understand your customers, you must study people: how they react to the things you say and do. For if you understand people and how to deal with them as individuals, then your job as a Pharmacy Assistant will become much easier.

People

People who come into a pharmacy form one of the largest cross-sections of the public; that is, children, teenagers, the aged, and men and women of all ages and in all walks of life. Pharmacy has the distinction of not catering for a specific part of the community; it caters for all and sundry.

You will, at one stage or another of your career, serve little children, perhaps only five or six years of age, who have been sent by their mothers to the pharmacy, clutching a note you can hardly decipher. You will also serve teenagers with all their needs and requirements. On the same day, you could well be serving a young mother who is taking her first stroll with her new baby and, naturally, she is going to bring it into the pharmacy for you to admire. The next customer could be a grandmother; then a great-grandfather.
You do not select your customers; they select you. The pharmacy caters to anyone who cares to walk in, and salespeople in Pharmacy are required to know how to act in any given set of circumstances. Each customer is different, so the Pharmacy Assistant must be able to adjust to any peculiarity or requirement.

Although this section is devoted to the study of people, we are indirectly studying ourselves, for we are also people, and we and our customers have many things in common in what we seek out of life. Before delving deeper into the subject of people, let us at least agree that for each one of us, there are really two levels of being – that which we wish to show others, and that which we keep to ourselves. The first acts like a veneer, to hide or protect the second (or real person).

When customers face you across the counter, the image they project might not necessarily be their true selves, and you as a Pharmacy Assistant must not be too quick in judging them.

If we assume that people match the image they project to us, we could categorise the well-dressed people as the wealthy ones and the not-so-well-dressed as the poor ones. You and I know that this is a fallacy, for it certainly is not always true that well dressed means rich and poorly dressed means poor.

How, then, can we judge people a little better? The only way is to tear down the veneer that surrounds the individual and look for the real person, and to do this we must apply psychology.

**Psychology**

Psychology is the study of the human mind, of mental states and processes, of human nature. Pharmacy Assistants must be vitally interested in psychology, for it is in the human mind that the motivation to buy originates.

Are we, as people, all alike? No, we are not really alike. We are different in our looks, our likes and our dislikes, the colour of our skin, our tastes – all of which can vary dramatically from one person to another. We have different features, we come in different shapes and sizes and ages, and differences in our cultures and life-styles.

Many of these differences are visible; we can see these things in each other. But what about mental differences, those things that we cannot see? Here we find what are called common denominators, things that are common to all of us. One such common denominator is the range of emotions and
feelings, but because they are not visible, we can never know precisely how another person feels. Have you ever told someone, ‘I know exactly how you feel?’ We can’t really know how someone else feels unless we have been in exactly the same predicament and are exactly the same person. As a different person, we would obviously feel and react differently.

Other common denominators are human needs. For example, we all need food, we all need water, and we all must have sleep. These needs are common to all of us, regardless of the other things that make us so different from one another.

When it comes to our psychological and physical needs, are we really different at all? No, we are not; in terms of human needs each person is exactly the same. What you want out of life may not be so different from what I want out of life. The methods might be different but the objectives would in fact be very much the same: happiness, security, etc.

Before we start discussing human desires, which are basically the motivations that make us go out to purchase any product, let us study how, under the influence of certain feelings and emotions, people vary in their behaviour patterns. In many cases, under the stress of these feelings and emotions, people will drop their veneer or image and project their true selves.

This happens quite frequently in moments of fear, happiness, sadness, and embarrassment – four different feelings that we would all have experienced. Try to recall the most embarrassing moment that you have had; do you remember how you handled the situation under the stress and pressure of embarrassment? You would probably find that your reaction to such embarrassment is quite different from another person’s.

Let’s look at an example of how people can give themselves away. Have you ever spilled your peas on the tablecloth when you were having dinner at a good restaurant in the company of, say, your boyfriend? Observation has shown that there are three different reactions from people in such predicaments: realism, embarrassment, and denial.

• Realism. One kind of person would react the same way to her spilled peas if she were at home or in a smart restaurant. She would gather them all up in a pile on the tablecloth and put them back on her plate. This is a sign of a person who is realistic: she has spilled her peas, so she picks them up again. She may not show that same realism in every situation, but when the veneer drops off under the stress of embarrassment, a realist appears.
• Embarrassment. The second person feels embarrassment. Not only once, when the peas are spilled, but twice. As she spills her peas, she brushes them in with her hands and hides them under the edge of her plate. The second moment of embarrassment arrives when the waiter comes to remove her plate; there is a beautiful green ring of peas left behind on the tablecloth.

• Denial. The third person reacts with an immediate cleaning-up procedure all around the plate. All the peas are pushed as far away from the plate as possible, in whatever direction the wave of the hand chooses to send them. This leaves a magnificent array of peas all over the table. This sort of reaction can be described as denial: they are not her peas; she did not do it, somebody else did.

As you can see from these three examples, people differ in their reactions to stress, but the reaction of the individual usually brings forth the true person. From such observations we can more readily tell what sort of person we are dealing with.

Moments of happiness and sadness can sometimes be quite confusing. For example, some people cry in moments of happiness as well as sadness, making it hard for another person observing them to know whether they are crying because they are happy or because they are sad.

Moments of fear normally reveal the true person, for it is then that we forget our image and concentrate on that which is frightening us.

People really become themselves when they are put under stress or strain. Under normal circumstances many customers could walk into your pharmacy and give you a completely wrong impression of the type of people they are. This proves, once and for all, that if you assume that people are the way they seem to be, you could be completely on the wrong track. You might not ever find out what they are really like until there is a moment of stress or deep emotion.

While we might all differ in the way we react in these situations, the fundamental needs of one person are largely the same as those of any other person. Both an individual’s needs and his reactions are determined by his mind. So, salesmanship is related to the working of a person’s mind, for it is in the realms of the mind that sales are created.

**Mental Steps to Buying**

The motivation to buy follows the same general path in everyone, passing from one stage of thought to another with possibly a little deviation. When
she goes out to buy anything at all, your customer’s mind, like yours, will go through a mental process which can be described in mental steps:

1. Admit the need for something.
2. Decide that a product will fill the need.
3. Go to the right source.
4. Agree on the price.
5. Want to buy at this time.

If this mental process is disturbed, no sale will take place. This process goes through some people’s minds as quickly as one can flick one’s fingers. Others will go through these mental steps in a slow, deliberate fashion, making decisions accordingly. Let us take this sequence of five mental steps and see how a customer might think when she comes into your pharmacy to buy something.

**Need, Product and Source**

What brings a customer into a pharmacy? Think back to the section of this text where we discussed selling to a plan. The same question was asked there, and we found that the answer is a need, one of two types: a known need or a general need. So, need is what brings the customer into your shop. You don’t stand outside your shop with a great big hook and say, ‘I need a customer,’ and grab one as she goes past, so the first mental step is an accepted fact at the moment the customer walks into your shop; that is, she has a need.

Because she is in your pharmacy, her second mental step must have been to ask herself what product would fill her need. At this point you, as a Pharmacy Assistant, would agree that you do have the product to fill her need and that she is in the right place, which is the third mental step.

The first three mental steps are easy to understand, as they are working for you, not because of any effort made on your part, but because the customer has willingly walked into the pharmacy (source) to get some item or preparation (product) to solve a problem (need).

**Price and Time**

At this stage you have to start to do some work as a Pharmacy Assistant. The customer, in this instance, might be thinking: ‘How much am I prepared to pay for this product?’ or ‘How much can I afford to pay for this product?’
When it comes to the fourth mental step in the customer’s mind – agree on the price – it is up to you, the Pharmacy Assistant, to convince the customer that the product you are offering is one that she can afford, one that she is prepared to pay for, gladly. You can, of course, only do this by showing her that the product is value for money and, also, that the product is effective and safe. Here, we are applying what we have learned at the beginning of this text: how to sell to a plan, how to recommend a product, and how to tell a planned sales story.

When it comes to price, the only part you can play to work in harmony with the mental steps of your customers is to give them product knowledge. At this stage if you do not give them value for money – if you do not express the effectiveness and safety of the product in relation to its price – then the flow of agreement between you and your customer has been lost. This will lead to a no-sale situation.

If the price does not give value for money, and if the information that you provide from your product knowledge is not sufficient to convince her that she has the right product, the customer’s mental processes could start to work in reverse. She may think, and perhaps say: ‘The price is too high, and I am obviously in the wrong shop. This is definitely not the right product as I certainly don’t need this.’ The other alternative a polite customer has, when you fail to relate the price to your customer, is to say to you, ‘I’ll think about that and come back tomorrow.’ You can be assured that if that statement is ever made to you, there is no need to wait until tomorrow to find out that your customer will not be coming back.

You have evidently failed to work in harmony with your customer’s mental steps. Your product knowledge was not enough to convince her that the product was the right one for her, that she was in the right pharmacy, that the product was at the right price, and that she needed it there and then. All this can happen if you lack product knowledge. While you may know how the mental processes work and the mental steps that will guide people to your shop to buy a product, unless you can tackle the fourth mental step – price – to the full satisfaction of your customers using your product knowledge, you will fail every time in making a sale at that moment.

With product knowledge you can make that fourth mental step as easy to take as the first three. It has been said many times that price is soon forgotten – quality never is. If you are convincing enough in discussing value, effectiveness, and safety, then price is soon forgotten and a sale is made immediately.

Sometimes price can be a major hurdle unless you can relate that price to what the customer wants to hear. Let us assume that you have a customer...
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who has come into your pharmacy to buy a slimming preparation. Let us go through the mental steps again: She has a need for a slimming preparation and she has picked your pharmacy as being the right source; all that remains for you is to convince her, through your product knowledge, that the price is value for money. You tell the customer all about the slimming preparation, your product knowledge is absolutely impeccable, and you leave nothing out of your sales presentation. Yet when you say, ‘... and this slimming preparation will cost you $29.94,’ your customer is taken aback by the price. That is not what she thought it would cost.

Let us change this price presentation and see if we can overcome this problem. You go through your product knowledge on the slimming preparation, but this time when you come to cost you say to your customer:

Although this seems rather expensive at $29.95 – it is worthwhile to figure the cost on a per-meal basis. You will find, Mrs Smith, that it comes out to 29 cents per meal and I doubt if these days you could get a full meal anywhere for just 29 cents.

The customer would now be listening to what she was expecting to hear. At 29 cents a meal it would be real value for money, and she would be likely to buy that product from you right there and then. You need not consider your customer’s economic situation at all, because if you explain the break-down to 29 cents a meal, you can succeed with most customers using the same discussion of price.

Price need not be related to dollars and cents at all times. It could in some instances be related to product knowledge. For example, a customer walks into the pharmacy and asks you for something to relieve her sore throat. This morning, when she realised that she needed a product for her sore throat, she had also heard an advertisement on the radio stating that Product X would ease her sore throat, and that it is available everywhere for a mere 30 cents. Just imagine the situation you are in now: The customer in your pharmacy wants a sore-throat medication, but also vaguely remembers that for a sore throat there is a product available at the supermarket for only 30 cents.

You, the good Pharmacy Assistant, go through the mental steps with her: ‘Yes, we do have a product that will help you in our pharmacy.’ You give her the name of your product, and without telling her what is in it and how it works you ask her for $1.60! It is at this moment that her mind will go back to the advertisement she heard on the radio: ‘If you have a sore throat, 30 cents will fix it. Buy Product X everywhere.’ By
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asking for $1.60 you have put an obstacle in the way of the fourth step and so she decides to leave it – because you do not offer her value for money.

How could you give her value for her $1.60? Quite easily. You could give her a product that would fill her need from your pharmacy, and you could give her value for money by saying:

Mrs Jones, this product has a local anaesthetic action that will soothe the pain in your throat immediately. The pain may be caused by a mild infection in your throat, and in this product, apart from the anaesthetic action that will give you instant relief, there is also a very strong antiseptic that will kill the bacteria causing the pain. The lozenges are pleasant tasting and conveniently packed in strips of 12, so that you needn’t take the whole box with you – you can put a few lozenges in your purse to last you the whole day.

Now you have given your customer value for money. You have given her $1.60 worth of information that makes the 30-cent product seem useless. The quality of the product you have described will overcome the difference in price, and she will buy her sore-throat medication from you at that moment.

Appeal to Human Desires

What do you think that you, as a Pharmacy Assistant, really sell in Pharmacy? If you can answer that question, there is no doubt that whenever you sell something to your customer he or she will hand you the money gladly, not reluctantly. This would confirm your selling ability as a Pharmacy Assistant. It would also show that Pharmacy Assistants do not really sell but rather guide people into buying.

Make a list of the various things that you think may answer the question: What do I really sell in Pharmacy? You will probably find after making this list that your answers are no different from those that have been given by successful salesmen the world over. Some of your answers may be:

- Products
- Service
- Pharmaceuticals
- Goodwill
- Satisfaction
You could probably go on listing such answers, but if I told you that these were all incorrect and asked you to think again about what you really sell, then maybe for the very first time you might start to think of fundamentals. Maybe now you are starting to form a clearer concept of what makes people part with cash for products or services.

It is important at this stage to realise that the vast majority of products you will be selling to your customers are used to treat symptoms. If we closed that part of the pharmacy we call the shop and maintained the dispensary, or if you as a Pharmacy Assistant sold none of the products on your shelves in the shop – you can be assured that the death rate in the community serviced by the pharmacy would not rise at all.

For example, think of the various products that you have used when you have suffered from the common cold. We all know that there is no cure, as yet, for the common cold. The products you purchased for yourself succeeded only in making you suffer less, thus making your life a little happier.

If a customer has a severe sore throat and can hardly swallow, you can sell him a sore-throat lozenge that will enable him to swallow more easily, but that does not mean you have actually treated the condition that is causing these symptoms. All you have done is make the customer feel better.

You can alleviate a headache and lower someone’s temperature with an analgesic, but that does not mean your customer will not have a headache or suffer with fever when the effects of the analgesic have worn off. There are many causes of headaches, and each cause has a particular treatment. There are many possible reasons why a customer is suffering with fever; by treating the fever we are only dealing with the symptoms and not the causes. The products sold in Pharmacy treat symptoms or feelings rather than their causes.

We sell products to fulfil a desire for better health, to satisfy an emotion, or to produce comfort.

‘Comfort’ seems to apply to most areas of human life. In the winter months you spend money gladly for warm clothes in order to be comfortable. You spend money gladly for food when you are hungry so that you feel satisfied or comfortable. You don’t hesitate to spend money for medical check-ups, purely for the comfort of having peace of mind when there is nothing wrong with you.

Advances in the field of modern psychology have led psychologists to believe that if we all think in generally the same manner (mental steps)
before we go out to purchase a product, then there must be more than one need or motivation that directs us to buy things and pay for them gladly. With this in mind a psychological survey of many thousands of people was taken. Information was gathered from all over the world, with respondents of all ages, from the very poor to the very rich.

The result of the survey was a list of human desires that motivate people to spend money gladly:

1. Security
2. Possession
3. Imitation
4. Good health
5. Sex and romance
6. Love and affection
7. Curiosity
8. Recreation
9. Recognition
10. Pleasure
11. Solitude

The 12 basic urges, which we have called human desires, are really the psychological drives that make your customers part with their money gladly. They represent every desire present in everyone, not just in some people. They are the real answer to the question, ‘What do I really sell in Pharmacy?’ – for what you sell is the gratification of these ever-present urges.

When you look at this list of human desires what you see is one aspect of a real human being, a person who has exactly the same needs as you and I have. Now, when you are face to face with a customer, you no longer see a person; you see a list of human desires that need fulfilling in that customer. Any well-dressed person, happy fellow, aggressive or disagreeable customer – that is, anyone facing us at the counter – is no different from you or I because he or she has exactly the same needs we have. So, from now on, whenever a customer walks into your pharmacy, forget what that customer looks like. Take no notice of the impression the customer is trying to give you insofar as his or her personality is
concerned; disregard anything that is material or visual; just treat each customer as a human being. For, when you remove that veneer which is protecting the person across the counter from you, what you uncover is the real human being, with those 12 human desires that exist in every person in the world and that each require gratification.

Now let’s look at each human desire in more depth, so that you will be able to associate human desire with products in your pharmacy.

**Security**

Security is the only human desire that could mean different things to different people. For example, some people find security in a healthy bank account or material things such as homes, cars, and furniture. Other people find their security in their friends and their loved ones. Most young people who live with their families find their security in their parents. Still others need a balanced combination of both emotional and material things to find total security for themselves.

Although there are many different definitions of the word ‘security’ in the outside world, when a person walks into a pharmacy the desire for security means only one thing: safety. It could be safety in the products she is using herself; it could be safety in the products she is buying for her loved ones.

**Possession**

We all have desires to possess all kinds of things. You may have said to yourself many times: ‘I wish I could have that dress,’ or ‘I wish I could buy those earrings.’ This is a sign that you desire something you do not possess already. You are no different from your customers, for you too are always trying to improve your situation. You might have a small car now and hope to have a bigger one tomorrow.

In the pharmacy, many departments may gratify the desire for possession. One such department for our female customers could be the cosmetic counter, supplying the latest colours in eye-shadow, for example. For men, the department to satisfy the need for possession might be the men’s toiletries section, where they can obtain a newly advertised after-shave lotion.
Imitation

The desire to imitate others has existed ever since the world began. Many industries survive only because there is this ever-present urge to be like or look like someone else, whether in dress, or hairstyle, or whatever. An example is the fashion industry; fashions, as you have probably noticed, tend to go around in circles. What is ‘fashion’ today is ancient history tomorrow, until designers decide to revive a certain look.

Many years ago the miniskirt was introduced into the fashion world by an English designer. For the very first time the knee was publicly exhibited due to the shortness of the skirt. The reviews of this fashion were not very flattering and it seemed that the miniskirt would be doomed to failure. No one could foresee that in seven or eight months the miniskirt would be worn in many countries throughout the world. And, in many cases, this sort of garment certainly did not suit the women who were wearing it. Why did they wear it? Why did girls choose to endure freezing legs in winter? Why did women all around the world delight in showing their knees – no matter how dimpled or knobbly or plump? The reason is simple enough: It was the urge to imitate other people. This fashion has been reintroduced recently to a less successful reception.

The cosmetic industry is another one that survives because of the human desire to imitate others. The various shades of lipstick change from year to year, according to the fashion of the time. It is much the same with other cosmetic products; they are replaced by new but similar products. Through the continuous fulfilment of the human desire to imitate, the cosmetic industry can keep its employees at work.

Males are no less susceptible than females to the desire to imitate. Just try to imagine any man 50 years ago using some of the men’s toiletries that are on the market today. In those days no man who called himself a man would consider smelling nice. The signs of a real he-man were the smoking of tobacco, being able to fight, and looking tall and tough. These days males spend millions of dollars a year on cosmetics.

The hair-care field also relies on the desire to imitate other people. Fashionable hair styles, hair colours and tints, etc. continually change and each time they do the majority of people try to adopt the latest fashion.

People buy products and gladly pay money for them – not because, in many cases, they like them personally, not because they think the products are more beautiful or useful or better in other ways, but because they want to look like other people.
**Good Health**

The desire to be healthy exists in everybody. There would not be too many people in this world who would wish they were sick. People spend money gladly to obtain those things which enable them to lead a healthy life. The old saying is so very true: Without health there is nothing. As the pharmacy is basically a health shop, you certainly will never run short of products to sell in order to fulfil the desire everyone has for good health.

One could say that nearly all pharmacy customers come into the shop to improve their health in some way or another, so this desire for good health is one that you will be satisfying every day in your work as a Pharmacy Assistant.

**Sex and Romance**

Sexual drives and romantic drives are part and parcel of the human being, and we all try to gratify these desires at some stage or another. In the pharmacy we cater to the satisfaction of sexual drives through the sale of contraceptives.

It was the satisfaction of sexual drives that made the Pill, for example, a multi-million dollar business. If sexual drives did not exist in people, there would not be such enormous sales of contraceptives.

Modern contraceptives were primarily designed to assist with family planning. When correctly used, they allow couples to plan their family so as most of them will say to you – they can have a child when they feel they can afford to. Both husband and wife can work until their combined incomes enable them to buy their car, build their home, and prepare for the coming of their first baby. If contraceptives did not exist, couples would either have to delay marriage or use methods of birth control that are not always successful. Now people can fulfil their sexual drives and still achieve their objective of a planned family.

Romantic drives are, of course, rather different from sexual drives, although there is still the need for fulfilment as with any other human desire. People spend money gladly for romantic reasons; for example, that special dinner for two, a gift, or some flowers.

Women have been said to buy cosmetics for three reasons: vanity, pride, and to attract the opposite sex. Men buy cosmetics for the same reasons. One can easily see why cosmetics play an important part in such motivations as vanity and pride. Romantic feelings are often the result of attraction to the opposite sex. Women will buy cosmetics to enhance
their beauty and, thus, attract men. Men will use the most expensive after-shave lotions to attract women. This attraction creates romantic drives, and money is spent gladly to fulfil these drives.

Love and Affection

Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Christmas, birthdays, and anniversaries all give us the opportunity to satisfy our desire to show love and affection for family and friends. It is for such events that we spend money gladly on gifts. We sometimes even overspend to show our love and affection. The greatest gift of all is the gift of love, and that really should not cost anything, but in fulfilling our desire to express love for other people, we have made the gift business one of the largest in the world. There is a gift for just about every occasion, and we buy it, gladly and without question.

Curiosity

The old adage warns us, ‘Curiosity killed the cat’; in the pharmacy, curiosity seems to open the purse strings. Human beings are interested by the new or the unusual. For example, if there is anything in the pharmacy that a customer has not seen before, she will often be attracted to that item. This desire to know more about things, especially those we don’t know much about, exists in all of us as curiosity. This desire can be a powerful motive to spend money gladly.

Recreation

People have always striven for a life with less work and more time for recreation. This is obviously a desire that is deeply instilled in every individual. Everyone likes to have a good time. When people are on holidays, they tend to spend more for two reasons:

Firstly, because they need new products to use during holiday activities, for example, suntan lotion; and secondly, because they have more time on their hands. As a result, people often overspend, and do so without complaining, during recreation time.

Recognition

This desire has been referred to indirectly from the very beginning of this course. It was suggested that because the pharmacy is a personalised business, you should call your customers by name, get to know them really well, and treat them as friends. When you address a customer by his
or her name, you are satisfying a desire in that customer to be recognised, and so to feel important. Do not forget that one of the basic ingredients of a successful pharmacy is to ‘personalise your business.’

Human beings are creatures of habit and in trying to fulfil our desire for recognition, we become regular customers of certain establishments. For instance, we might go regularly to the same garage, not because the petrol is any better than at another garage, but because we are recognised there. Often we are greeted by name and treated in a friendly manner; we are taken care of. Our desire has been fulfilled, and so we keep returning to that same environment.

Pleasure

Pleasure is indeed a human desire that we all strive to fulfil and, whatever the source of the pleasure or however much money one must pay to obtain it, rest assured that people will spend that money gladly, without hesitation.

Solitude

The desire to be alone and to avoid human contact exists in all of us at one time or another. You have probably said to others many times, ‘For heaven’s sake, leave me alone’ or ‘I wish I could be left alone for a while.’ We all need our solitude, and we all like to be left alone sometimes to gather our thoughts, examine our conscience, or take stock of what has been happening. Some people have been known to spend millions just to be able to say, ‘I am alone.’ You have probably read in the newspaper of a very wealthy person buying an island in the Pacific just to be able to retreat from ‘civilisation’ and be alone. People often spend money gladly to achieve solitude.

Comfort

After going through the list of human desires we see that comfort is only one of these, although an extremely important one to the Pharmacy profession. Since most pharmacy products treat only symptoms, comfort is often the main motive for spending money on these products. Peace of mind is one aspect of comfort which is very often bought from a pharmacy, in the form of products that promote health or prevent illness. So we can see that there are many products in a pharmacy that are bought to fulfil the human desire for comfort.
Successful Selling in Pharmacy

Make Use of the Buying Motives

The 12 human desires can be considered the buying motives, and the satisfaction of human desire is what makes people spend money gladly. So, basically, human desires and buying motives are exactly the same. It is, nevertheless, rather hard for any salesperson to remember the 12 human desires when serving a customer. For the sake of brevity, and also to help you remember the buying motives much more easily, the 12 human desires can be condensed into what is called the five major buying motives:

1. Pride
2. Affection
3. Comfort
4. Economy

To help you remember the five major buying motives, glance down the list and you will find that the first letters of each of these words form another word: PACES.

The five buying motives represented by the word PACES incorporate the 12 human desires, as is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIDE</th>
<th>covers</th>
<th>IMITATION</th>
<th>CURIOSITY RECOGNITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFFECTION</td>
<td>covers</td>
<td>SEX AND ROMANCE</td>
<td>LOVE AND AFFECTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PLEASURE</td>
<td>GOOD HEALTH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMFORT</td>
<td>covers</td>
<td>RECREATION</td>
<td>COMFORT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECONOMY</td>
<td>covers</td>
<td>POSSESSION</td>
<td>COMFORT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECURITY</td>
<td>covers</td>
<td>SECURITY</td>
<td>SOLITUDE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>COMFORT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once again, ask yourself what you sell in Pharmacy. Now that the buying motives have been condensed into five major motives and these five motives incorporate all 12 human desires, your answer is:


- **Pride.** ‘This is the latest shade of lipstick put out by Revlon. It is very much in fashion at the moment.’
- **Affection.** ‘I think this lipstick will suit you admirably. It is just made for your type of complexion.’
- **Comfort.** ‘This will stop your cough and give you a good night’s sleep.’
- **Economy.** ‘You will save 74 cents by buying the larger size.’
- **Security.** ‘This shampoo won’t sting the baby’s eyes.’

When selling Economy, for example, the right words are most important. You often hear Pharmacy Assistants say to their customers when trying to sell Economy: ‘Small, medium, or large?’ or ‘60 cents, 95 cents, or $2.05?’ These are definitely not the right words! What are you selling when you present your sales story in this fashion? Nothing! All you are doing is offering your customer a choice of three sizes or three prices. To sell Economy the presentation should be:

There are two sizes to choose from. The 150-ml size costs 60 cents. I would suggest the 300-ml size. That will save you 28 cents.

In this presentation you have told the customer that there are two sizes, you have stated that the price of the smaller size is 60 cents, but you have emphasised the saving of 28 cents when considering the second size. Our sales presentation finished with the words ‘That will save you 28 cents.’

This sort of presentation will also force the customer to ask you, ‘How much is the larger size?’ If you read through the presentation again, you will find that there is no mention of the price of the larger size. What you have done, therefore, is to direct the customer’s attention to the larger size. Then you will be in a position to tell her the price and explain the savings in greater detail.

Obviously there are far too many products in a pharmacy that come in multiple sizes for us to remember every saving in dollars and cents. A lot of homework has to be done to be prepared for any such sales situation. This is where the notebook becomes important. You can list the products
alphabetically, or under departments and then alphabetically. You should use your spare time during the day to look around the shelves at the stock you have in the pharmacy; select products where savings can be made, list them alphabetically, and work out the savings accordingly.

The following example demonstrates how to determine the amount saved by buying the large economy size:

**EXAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Saving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Codral Pain Relief</td>
<td>20 tabs</td>
<td>$2.44</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codral Pain Relief</td>
<td>50 tabs</td>
<td>$4.40</td>
<td>$2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codral Pain Relief</td>
<td>100 tabs</td>
<td>$7.70</td>
<td>$1.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The savings shown above are reached by simple calculation. To compare the 20 tablet pack to the 50 tablet pack, multiply the price of 20 tabs by 2 = $4.88. Then add the price of 10 tablets @ the 20 tabs price i.e. $2.22 and the answer is $4.88 + $2.22 = $7.10. The saving is $7.10 – $4.40 = $2.70.

The cost of buying 100 tabs @ the 50 tablets price would be $4.40 x 2 = $8.80.

Compare that to buying 100 tabs @ $7.70, then you save $8.80 – $7.70 = $1.10. Note that the overall saving available on the 100 tabs pack when compared to buying 5 x 20 tab packs is substantial i.e. 5 x $2.44 = $12.20. 1x 100 tab pack = $7.70, saving $4.50.

Similarly, the 50 tablet pack can be compared to the 100 tablet pack to arrive at a saving of $1.10.

Your alphabetical list should include entries like the following:

**EXAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Saving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actifed CC</td>
<td>100 ml</td>
<td>$4.60</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200 ml</td>
<td>$6.99</td>
<td>$2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benedryl Expectorant</td>
<td>100 ml</td>
<td>$3.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200 ml</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You will have worked out the savings for your customers long before you have any reason to use them. When the opportunity arises, you have all the information at your fingertips and can present it to your customers immediately. The written word carries a lot of weight, and our customers will be suitably impressed by the fact that you have prepared a notebook.
with this information. You have shown that you have an interest in your customers by spending time working out these various savings in order to save their money.

This personal interest is something that is not often seen in business but it is necessary in Pharmacy. The amount of interest you show will determine the number of sales, because people spend money gladly to satisfy the human desire of Economy.

Without such pre-planning you could also place yourself in some very embarrassing situations with your customers. Suppose you offered your customer two sizes, and instead of saying 'medium or large?' or '69 cents or $2.05?' you said: 'The small one will cost you 69 cents but you save quite a bit by purchasing the larger size.'

The customer might answer: How much is 'quite a bit'?  
Assistant: Quite a lot.  
Customer: How much is 'quite a lot'?  
Assistant: Heaps.  
Customer: How much is 'heaps'?  
Assistant: A fair bit.  
Customer: How much is 'a fair bit'?  
Assistant: I don’t know.

Don’t let this happen to you. Don’t count time in the pharmacy; make time count. Preparing your notebook is one excellent way to make time count and you will later be counting money.

Prices shown are not necessarily correct. They are for the purpose of illustrating how to work out 'savings'. By the way when preparing your list use ‘pen’ for names of product and ‘pencil’ for prices, why? Because the names of the products do not change whilst prices do change quite frequently.

**How Motives are Applied to Pharmacy**

Your job as a Pharmacy Assistant is to guide people into buying, by pointing out how the product will fulfil the human desire the customer has when she requests any product. The only way you will become really expert at selling by the buying motives is to practise.

- Pre-plan phrases to suit the products you are selling.
- Make a list of the selling points as you see them.
- Apply the selling points to the various buying motives.
If you can do all this on a regular basis, you be selling by the buying motives and applying the Golden Rule of selling in Pharmacy:

Whatever you are selling, whatever advantages and benefits you are likely to present to your customers – whether you are appealing to their emotions or their better reasoning – check to make sure that every advantage you mention will match a buying motive.

The rule of selling by the buying motives is simple, and it will make you a more effective salesperson – a creative salesperson.

Why is this rule so important? Because people do not buy advantages just because they are advantages. They will buy advantages because they make them feel proud, bring them affection, enhance their comfort, satisfy their sense of getting a fair deal, and make them feel more secure. And these buying motives are PACES; the paces towards successful selling in Pharmacy: the application of the buying motives, which incorporate the 12 human desires that are found in every human being. This is your job as a creative salesperson, as a Pharmacy Assistant. Your business in Pharmacy is people; understand them, offer fulfillment of their human desires, and you will be playing your part in the Health Team.

Here is a list of departments related to their respective buying motives. These examples will show you how to apply buying motives to some of the departments in a pharmacy.

- Baby needs: Affection, comfort, security, pride
- Cosmetics: Pride, affection, security
- Coughs and colds: Comfort, economy
- Vitamins: Comfort, security, economy
- Men’s toiletries: Pride, affection, security
- Photographics: Affection, pride, comfort
- Gifts: Affection

Baby Needs

Maternal love is one of the strongest loves known to mankind and is indeed a self-sacrificing love. Mothers have been known to do without necessities themselves to be able to buy things for their babies. It is important that you deal very carefully with a mother, for if she trusts you with caring for her baby, who is the most cherished person in any family, then obviously she will have no qualms about letting you take care of her and the rest of her family.
Successful Selling in Pharmacy

The success of the baby business in a pharmacy is looked upon as the launching pad for the success of the total pharmacy. The words selected in presenting products to mothers for their babies have to be chosen very carefully, and obviously the baby’s welfare must be put ahead of anything else in your discussions. A few examples will show you that by using the right words you can appeal to the motive of maternal love. Once you master the techniques of appealing to maternal love, your pharmacy will prosper and your job will become secure.

We will assume that the product you are offering is a sterilising solution for baby bottles. It has three major selling points:

1. It is simple to use.
2. It is safe for the baby.
3. It is economical.

If you were selling this product, which of those three selling points would you put first to your customer? Unless you selected ‘It is safe for the baby’ as your first advantage for this product, you did not make the sale. The presentation for such a product could go as follows:

I would suggest you use this product to sterilise your baby’s bottles, Mrs Adams. It is safe to use as it kills all known organisms that cause gastroenteritis and thrush. Even though you do not rinse the bottle when you take it out of the solution, no harm will be done to your baby as this product is very, very safe to use.

It is also simple to use, as you can see by the directions on this chart. You will have more time to spend with your baby when you don’t have to sterilise the bottles in boiling water.

And if you buy the large size it will save you $1.05. With the money you save you could buy that lovely rattle you’ve had your eye on for some time.

In the first paragraph we put the baby’s welfare first. The words that will convince the mother that this product is what she wants for her baby are: ‘kills all known organisms that cause gastroenteritis and thrush’ and ‘no harm will be done to your baby.’ Those words will appeal to her maternal love and the protective instinct that a mother has for her child. She certainly does not want her baby to contract gastroenteritis or thrush; nor does she want to use any product that might harm her child.
When we suggested that the product was simple to use, we also suggested that the time saved by using this method can be spent with the baby. Again, this will appeal to the mother’s love for that child.

In the third paragraph we related the economy of the larger size to the rattle that the mother could buy for her baby, once again the appeal to maternal love.

In that short presentation when we pointed out the safety of the product, we appealed to the human desires of Affection, Security, and Comfort (peace of mind). When we used simplicity as a selling point and related it to extra time with the baby we again appealed to the human desire of Affection for that child. Our third point, economy, used the buying motives of Economy and Affection by giving the baby a new rattle. All the selling points satisfied the Pride a mother has in her happy, healthy baby.

Suppose, on the other hand, we had said to the customer:

‘I recommend that you use this product because it will save you money, and with the money you save you can buy that glamorous lipstick you have been looking at. Secondly, it is also simple to use, which would allow you more time to visit the neighbours or have a game of bridge with them. And by the way, it is also safe for the baby.’

When a mother is in the baby department, her only interest is her baby. She will go to extremes to ensure that the baby gets the best, and nothing but the best will do when a mother purchases a product for her child. So remember, when selling a baby product, always place the advantages in their order of priority: Baby comes first, and any other advantages to the mother come a very, very poor second. Otherwise you have not related the selling points to your customer’s buying motive, the fulfilment of maternal love.

**Cosmetics**

For our next example, we can use the same customer who has just bought the baby product that is simple, safe, and economical to use. After completing her transactions in the baby department, the mother walks across to the cosmetic department. While we were in the baby department we needed to satisfy her maternal love for the baby. Now that she is at the cosmetic counter we are satisfying a self-love.
When we are selling cosmetics we present all the benefits to the person, which is the complete reverse of the procedure when selling baby products to that same person. This must surely show that one person may need two different types of approaches, maybe even three or four different types of approaches, especially if she is being served in two, three, or four different departments where her buying motives differ dramatically from each other.

Pride

Assistant:

‘This is the latest shade of lipstick. It is very fashionable this season.’

What will sell the lipstick to the customer is not necessarily the actual shade of lipstick, but your words: ‘the latest shade’ and ‘it is very fashionable.’ You are not selling a product – you are selling the fulfilment of a human desire, making use of the buying motive of Pride.

Affection

Assistant:

‘This lipstick will suit you admirably. It is just made for your type of complexion.’

The words used to sell this lipstick, ‘will suit you admirably’ and ‘just made for your type of complexion,’ refer to self-love and taking care of oneself, appealing to the buying motive of Affection.

Security

Assistant:

‘If you follow the skin-care program I have just recommended, your skin will take on a more youthful appearance and, because the products are hypoallergenic, they will not irritate your sensitive skin.’

You would sell this skin-care program, not because of the products in it, but because of your words, ‘more youthful appearance,’ which offer security against old age and Security is a buying motive. Secondly, because you said to the client, ‘they will not irritate your sensitive skin,’ you are again offering Security in the safety of the product.
Coughs and Colds

Comfort

Assistant:

‘This cough mixture will help to stop your cough and give you a comfortable night’s sleep.’

What sells the cough mixture in this instance are the words ‘stop your cough and give you a comfortable night’s sleep.’ To a person who is coughing, not coughing and being able to sleep are of the utmost importance. Those words fulfil the buying motive of Comfort.

Economy

Assistant:

‘I would suggest that you take these cold tablets in the specified doses. You will find that the larger packet will save you $2.25.’

Here you are applying the buying motive of Economy to the sale of cold tablets, and you would sell the larger package with the words ‘save $2.25.’

Vitamins

Security, Comfort and Economy

Assistant:

‘Now that you are just about rid of that cold I would suggest that you start on a course of multivitamins, to build up your resistance and thus avoid a relapse. The larger bottle with 500 capsules will save you $2.50.’

When you sell vitamins with the words ‘build up your resistance and thus avoid a relapse’ you are satisfying the buying motive of Security and Comfort. With the words ‘save you $2.50’ you sell Economy.
Men’s Toiletries

Pride, Affection and Security

The buying motives here are Pride, Affection, and Security – the same buying motives as were seen in the cosmetics department. Your selling comments would be much the same because women use cosmetics and men use men’s toiletries for the same reasons.

Photographics

In the photography department of your pharmacy you tend to have regular customers. Once a person gets into the habit of leaving film for developing and obtaining a new roll at the same time, you will see that customer return again and again.

The buying motives of these customers are Affection, Pride, and Comfort.

Affection

Affection is a buying motive that you can fulfil by selling a camera to a mother, pointing out to her how she can keep a wonderful record of the growth and development of her baby. It is her love for her baby that will make her purchase the camera and take as many pictures as possible of that child, at least throughout the first two years of its life. It has been proven by talking to people in the developing and printing business that the most photographed person in the family is the young baby. Look at an old family photo album in your own home. You will probably find hundreds of photographs of yourself as a baby, and as you grow older the number of photographs of you in that album diminishes accordingly.

Pride

How do you apply Pride to the sale of a camera? The amateur photographer, one who is likely to spend the best part of his leisure time clicking the shutter of his camera, takes great pride in his work. You might even have a friend who bores you to death by showing you a seemingly endless stream of photographs he took during his last holiday.

To the amateur photographer the quality of his photographs is of great importance. His pride as an amateur photographer is involved with every shot he takes, and you could sell a camera with the buying motive of Pride in this fashion:
‘I would suggest that you consider this 35-mm Praktica camera. Although it is easy to use, the results are nearly always perfect.’

It wasn’t the camera you were highlighting, but rather what the camera can do for this amateur photographer.

**Comfort**

The third buying motive that could sell a camera for you is Comfort. Suppose your customer is a parent buying the first camera for his young son. You could sell that camera by saying:

‘This camera is so easy to use that a person of any age can get very good results with it. There are no apertures to worry about and no light metering to fuss about either, so it is only a matter of aiming the camera and you will get good results.’

Here you are selling peace of mind to the parent by pointing out that the camera is easy to use, so that, the young son will have no problems with it.

In this example, you are appealing to the human desire of Comfort in two people:

1. The parent has peace of mind because this is a good camera for his son.
2. The son will enjoy, and be comfortable, using a camera that is simple to operate.

**Gifts**

The gift department in a pharmacy exists only because of the human desire to show love and affection for families, friends, and neighbours. We satisfy this desire when we buy a gift.

In most transactions dealing with the sale of a gift, it is quite normal for the two people involved the customer and the salesperson – to completely ignore that most important third person, the one who is going to receive the gift.

Have you ever heard a conversation like this one?

Customer: *I would like to buy my mother a gift for Mother’s Day.*
Assistant: *This is a very popular line. We sell quite a lot of these.*
Customer: *Well, I can see why – that is very nice. I like it; do you?*
Assistant: Yes, I do. I like it very much.
Customer: I like it, too. I tell you what – I think I’ll buy that for my mother.

What has happened here? The assistant has shown the customer a gift. The customer likes what she sees, and asks the assistant whether she likes it. The assistant likes it too. So, based on the fact that the customer likes it, and the assistant likes it as well, then the mother must like it too. Why must she like it? Because the assistant and the customer like it.

There was not a thought spared for that third person who is to receive the gift. These two people agreed among themselves that they liked it, so Mother must jolly well like it too. Where is the thought that we should give to the person we love so much, the one for whom we are buying the gift?

While the customer has the right to ask you whether you like the gift, wouldn’t it be better if, when you give your answer, you also remind your customer that the gift is being bought for a person who is not there to see it. You could say:

‘Yes, I do like it, but then you know your mother better than I do. Do you think she would like it?’

These words will bring your customer back onto the right track by thinking about the person who is to receive this gift. If you try using these words, you will find that very often your customer will say:

No, I don’t think she would like that. It is not quite her. I’m so glad you mentioned that. Could I see something else?

By bringing the third person back into the discussion, you give your customer the chance to spend her money gladly and to be happy with her final decision.

While the monetary value of a gift is not important, the thought behind it is everything, and it is this thought that we must try to put into our customers’ minds when they are buying a gift, so that they satisfy the buying motive of Affection.
How Advertising is Used in Pharmacy

We have emphasised throughout our discussion of the buying motives that it is words that sell products – selected words that will appeal to human desires through the buying motives that attract a customer’s attention to any product or service that you are offering.

In the advertising world these or similar words have been used for centuries. Slogans in advertising are aimed at human desires, and if the slogan does not relate to one of the five major buying motives, the brain will neither retain it nor accept it. That slogan is doomed to be forgotten, and the product that it is advertising will never take off.

Slogans in Advertising

Let us analyse a few of the more commonly known advertising slogans, to show how the words used with the name of the product sell the product itself. You will find that these words will always relate to one of the five major buying motives.

1. ‘Aspro will ease it.’ The words that attract the customer’s attention to the product are ‘will ease it.’ This slogan obviously sells Comfort, the human desire that is fulfilled by buying Aspro.

2. ‘When you retire we go to work.’ This is the slogan for the retirement fund, Westpac Club 55. It suggests that if working people invest their money with the Club, they can enjoy the Security of knowing that they will be cared for financially after they have retired.

3. ‘Bex is better.’ Better implies the Security of having a superior product. ‘Better’ could also mean Pride; we all want to think that we have the best things in life.

4. ‘Berger Paints keep on keeping on.’ These words sell us Economy. They say that this type of paint lasts for a long time. Therefore we save money by not having to buy additional quantities of paint so often. They are also selling Comfort, because we do not have to paint so frequently.

5. ‘Things go better with Coke.’ Coca-Cola is one of the most popular soft drinks in the world. This slogan once helped to make Coca-Cola the well-known product that it is today. The words appeal to the five major buying motives: Pride, Affection, Comfort, Economy, and Security.

As you can see from the above slogans, it is truly the way words are put together that influences people to react to whatever products or services are offered. If the words appeal to buying motives, people will react, and
react favourably. If the words do not appeal to buying motives, the sales story will soon be forgotten.

Today we live in what is called a permissive society. This means that certain topics that were once mentioned only in private can now be talked about quite openly. Two examples of such topics are sex and religion. The advertising world soon realised that it had to keep up with the times, so advertising slogans and product names became a little bit more permissive.

Consider the names of perfumes that were sold 20 or 30 years ago. In those days the name of the perfume gave you an indication of the type of scent that perfume had, for example Lavender Water or Magnolia Blossom. Other names suggested wishful thinking; for example, there once was a perfume called Evening in Paris. These perfumes have now disappeared because their names were not modern enough; there were no suggestive overtones in such product names. What we have now are perfumes with such names as Intimate, Tabu, Opium, and Ambush. Each of these words implies the fulfilment of sexual and romantic drives.

Slogans in the Pharmacy

Let us relate advertising techniques and slogans to the field of Pharmacy. The purpose of giving you so many examples earlier, apart from showing that well-selected words do sell products, is to draw your attention to the fact that in a pharmacy there is display material in the form of showcards that carry slogans. Take a close look at the display material in your own pharmacy. Read some of the slogans on the showcards. If the slogans on these showcards do not appeal to one or a combination of the five buying motives, they are taking up very valuable space and returning nothing in the way of sales. Unless the showcard appeals to one of the PACES, it has no value in attracting attention to the products in the pharmacy.

If the showcard does appeal to the buying motives, try to understand the slogan, be it permissive or otherwise, and formulate your sales story, as you learned in the section Tell a Planned Sales Story, to incorporate the same message. But put it into your own words. Then you can be sure that you are matching advantages to buying motives in your sales story and relating it to the display material that is doing exactly the same thing for you but in a silent manner.

If you really want to assess a card and its value, do not pick it up and read it, but rather place it on a counter, walk at least three or four metres away from it, and then turn around and have a quick look at it. If the slogan is not the first thing that attracts you, that card is likely to be wasted. Your
customer will glance towards it as she is walking past. What attracts your eye will usually attract her eye, so if the thing that attracts you does not appeal to buying motives, that card can be given back to the manufacturer as you have no real use for it.

Later, in another section of this course, we will discuss the proper use of display material in the pharmacy.
Checkpoint Questions Two

Please write your answers in the spaces provided.

Check your answers at the end of this study unit.

If you have any incorrect answers, go back and review the relevant sections in this chapter.

1) What is a pharmacy’s real business?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2) Name the five mental steps that are taken when a customer buys something.
A. _________________________________________________
B. _________________________________________________
C. _________________________________________________
D. _________________________________________________
E. _________________________________________________

3) What do most products sold in a pharmacy treat?
________________________________________________________________________

4) Name 12 human desires which motivate people to spend money.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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5) Which five buying motives are represented by the mnemonic PACES?
Analyse Your Customer

When you analyse your customers, you try to size up their spending power and how they wish to be handled. Every customer has the right to be treated as he or she wants to be treated.

To size up a new customer’s spending power is usually a pretty hard task to perform. Most pharmacies, luckily for you, have regular customers. Loyalty to one pharmacy makes people return because they are pleased with the service they get and their personality fits in with the personality of the staff and the chemist. Having the majority of your customers as regular customers makes your job of assessing their spending power a lot easier. After a while you will know how much each of your customers can afford every time he or she purchases something from you.

Be sure that you never embarrass customers by offering a product they cannot afford. If you personalise your business, you will know how to avoid this sort of situation. Remember, also, that some people may have more money to spend than you think. If this is the case, and if there is any doubt, always choose the medium-priced article to start with.

When analysing a customer, to determine what type of customer he or she is, you should note, for example, the carriage of the person (that is, confident or nervous), the style of dress, etc., but remember that many shabbily dressed people could have large bank accounts.

Other things that will help you size up a customer are tone of voice, mannerisms, and accent. All these things will help you to place your customer into one of several categories.

Your estimations may not be correct for all customers, but at least this method gives you a starting point for analysing customers. Once you have categorised a customer, you probably will know the best way to handle him or her.

There are few different types of customers:

1. The nervy customer: Tired and cross, excitable, impatient
2. The dependent customer: Timid and sensitive, undecided, old and difficult, children, foreigners, handicapped
3. The disagreeable customer: Inquisitive, talkative, insulting
4. The trying customer: Critical, hypochondriacs, indifferent, bargain-hunters, two friends
5. The commonsense customer.
The Nervy Customer

Tired and Cross

The various types of people to be categorised under the nervy heading could include a customer who needs to be handled with a lot of patience because she is tired and cross. It could well be that this same customer is normally a happy-go-lucky person; she usually greets you with a cheerful ‘Hello’ and even has a little joke to tell you to start the day off.

One morning this person comes into your shop and you greet her cheerfully, and all you get back is a grunt. In a situation such as this, your most natural response is to ask your customer, ‘What’s wrong with you?’

Believe it or not, this is one of the worst questions you could possibly ask. Some people claim that by asking the customer what is wrong, you give her a chance to tell you all about it, and thus to get it off her chest. That’s one side of the story.

From my experience, I have found that in Pharmacy if you ask that question, you invite the customer to relive all the various things that have happened to make her so tired and cross this morning. And by reliving these bad experiences she is likely to be twice as tired and twice as cross by the time she has finished telling you about it.

So you avoid asking that question. As a matter of fact you ignore your customer’s tired and cross attitude and you continue to deal with her in a pleasant and cheerful manner; she will soon realize that you really have nothing to do with her state of mind, so she has no reason to be so unpleasant to you. Before long you will find that your tired and cross customer has changed her attitude toward you.

In this instance, if you sell nothing to that customer and if she leaves the pharmacy a little happier than when she walked in, you will have played your part as a Pharmacy Assistant, for your position demands that you help people, and by making this person a little happier you have certainly helped a great deal.

This is one example of how demanding a Pharmacy Assistant’s job can be, for you do not even have the privilege of doing what comes naturally. You cannot ask what is wrong with her, but rather you must play-act a role that will make your customer happier by the time she leaves your pharmacy. It is difficult to maintain a happy and cheerful disposition when the customer is not co-operative. This is where you need patience, tact, and consideration.
Excitable

In the nervy category we will also include those customers who are excitable. There are a number of people whose temperament tends to make them rather excitable. These customers express themselves much better by gesticulating than by speaking to you, or by gesticulating while speaking to you. When people start waving their arms around as they talk to you, you will find that it’s like a contagious disease; you are likely to do the same. Then there are two people waving furiously at each other with the great danger that someone is likely to get hit.

Furthermore, it is quite possible that one of your best customers could be walking past the door of your pharmacy and could see you and your customer waving your arms at each other as if you are about to indulge in war. What will she think of all this?

The best way to handle this sort of excitable customer is to stay perfectly still. If she waves her arms around madly, you are better off tying yours behind your back before you get caught up in this mad, gesticulating action. If her voice rises with the excitement of the conversation, you must maintain that quiet and cheerful manner that you always use when dealing with your customers.

If you cannot calm your customer with your own quiet behaviour, the next step is to watch her hands as she is talking to you. Move your head in the same direction that her hands are moving. This will have a significant effect on the customer. She will soon realise that your eyes are following her hand movements; she will become so aware of this that slowly but surely those hands will eventually be hanging quite limply at her sides.

Impatient

Another type of customer who can be placed in the nervy category is the impatient person. This customer does not even want to wait for her turn to be served. She plays drums on the top of your counter with her fingers to show her impatience. She tries to get you to do everything in a rush. There is only one way to deal with the impatient customer: calm her with your own calmness.
The Dependent Customer

Timid and Sensitive

Timid and sensitive customers are part of our dependent category. This type of customer can normally be observed walking rather slowly into the pharmacy, in many cases tiptoeing in order to make as little noise as possible, and to be as inconspicuous as she possibly can. She is likely to walk up to you and whisper in your ear something that to her is of a very confidential nature. Something like, ‘I need something to help me get rid of my constipation. I am suffering very badly.’

The worst thing you can do in this case is to speak to her in such a loud voice that not only can she hear you, but also the people a few metres away can hear you too. Suppose you had turned around and looked through your shelves for a suitable remedy, meanwhile telling her in a reassuring tone, ‘Well, constipation is not much of a problem; we can fix that in no time.’ I can promise you that by the time you had turned around to face your customer, you would have found that she was halfway down the street, possibly still running.

This customer is very timid and sensitive. She does not want the whole world to know that she is suffering from constipation. You have told everyone in the pharmacy that she has constipation, so she is on her way home never to return again.

Another instance that comes to mind is the occasion when a customer walked into a pharmacy and whispered to the chemist: ‘I want something to worm the kids’.

The chemist could not remember where the worming preparations were kept, so without blinking an eyelid, he stood at full height and yelled at the top of his voice to one of his Assistants on the other side of the pharmacy: ‘Where are the worming preparations? I can’t find anything since we reorganised this pharmacy.’

The customer took off like a scared rabbit. This customer was also timid and sensitive; she did not want everyone to know that her children needed worming. She was probably one of those people who believe that when a person has worms, it is a slur on the cleanliness of his or her household. Whatever her reasons were, she whispered in her chemist’s ear and he should have whispered right back in hers.
That is the way to deal with sensitive and timid customers. If they speak in hushed tones, then reply to them in the same way. Handle them with a lot of gentleness: they frighten easily.

Undecided

The undecided customer is definitely dependent; she depends on you to help her make a decision. This happens frequently when selling cosmetics: the customer often has a lot of difficulty in selecting the right lipstick.

A woman who cannot select a shade of lipstick will tend to ask for help in a rather unusual fashion. The situation could very well go something like this:

Assistant: Here we are, Mrs Jones. Drawing on my experience and training, I think these three shades will suit you.

Customer: They look quite nice. I do like this one. Oh, but look at this one. Isn’t that pretty? And that third shade is absolutely beautiful. What do you think?

Assistant: I think all three of them are suitable really. It’s up to you to make the final decision.

Customer: It’s hard because I do like this one, and this one is pretty, and the third one is beautiful.

The worst thing you, the Pharmacy Assistant, could do at this stage is to agree that it is hard, and repeat what the customer has said. By agreeing you are making this little molehill into a mountain. By agreeing you are basically telling your customer:

You have a terribly difficult decision to make. I have the same problem and isn’t it hard! Heavens! Which one shall I pick?

These people require somebody to help them make their decision rather than agree with them. There are many permutations and combinations of the words ‘pretty,’ ‘lovely,’ and ‘beautiful,’ and you and your customers could have a delightful day trying to find ways of saying ‘pretty,’ ‘lovely,’ and ‘beautiful’ in different sequences. That would still not help to make a final decision.

The customer is dependent upon you. She, in this instance, hasn’t got the courage to make a decision and select one shade. The way to deal with this customer is, of course, to make the decision for her. You could do this quite easily by saying to your customer:
I can see you’re having a little difficulty in selecting the right shade, Mrs Jones. This is only because all three of these shades do suit you very well. But with my training – you see, I’m a qualified cosmetician – let me assure you that this is the right one for you.

And, on saying that, you should pick up, say, the third shade you selected and hand it to the customer. You will be amazed at her reaction. The customer will thank you profusely – not because you gave her the lipstick, but because you made the decision for her.

The undecided customer is usually quite a joy to serve, insolar as you can at least have a laugh to yourself about what’s going on. You must, apart from deciding for her, display sympathy.

**Old and Difficult**

People in the older generation are sometimes called the ‘old and difficult customer,’ even though such a description should never be used under any circumstances, be it in Pharmacy or anywhere else. The age of a person does not change the needs that we all have or the things that we want out of life. Age in itself is only a number, and whether our customer is old or young or middle-aged, we should still give the same efficient service at all times.

This is a common situation in a pharmacy where untrained staff are working: An elderly customer hobbles into the pharmacy on her stick. As soon as she is noticed, the Assistants disappear behind various counters because not one of them wants to serve this customer. She is, as they say, ‘old and difficult’.

Visualise the situation now: An old lady standing in the middle of the pharmacy, supporting herself on her stick, and not a soul in sight to serve her. Would you like to be in the same situation yourself one day? Some of us obviously are going to live long enough to be just as old, and we may be just as difficult in times to come. Does this customer deserve this lack of service because she is old?

Older customers can damage your business if not treated correctly. They have a lot of time on their hands to tell all their friends what terrible service they get every time they walk into your pharmacy. They could have daughters with large families who are also customers of the pharmacy where you work. If one of your older customers goes back to her daughter and tells her the sort of service that she is getting from you, are you likely to lose the daughter as a customer as well? I think so.
So, with the old and difficult, you must show them the respect that they
deserves give them the utmost in service, and, if sympathy is required,
offer it.

Some of them are talkative. They may live by themselves, and it could be
a highlight of their day to come into the shop and take the opportunity to
have a little talk to someone while purchasing something. Don’t be too
hasty in brushing them off. If you are not busy, and there are no other
customers who need serving, then by all means take the opportunity to
have a talk. If another customer does come in, excuse yourself with the
words, ‘Excuse me, Mrs Anderson, I’ll just go and attend to this customer.
I’ll be back promptly.’

Show respect and give as much time as you can to your older customers.
If you haven’t got the time at that moment, say so; they will wait if they
want to, but you must treat them with gentleness.

What is your answer to this question: If an old lady in her seventies comes
into your pharmacy and asks to see some lipsticks, what will you offer
her? The latest fashion shades or some of the older or outdated shades?

Answer this question before you read on.

If you decided not to offer her the latest shades, you have learned nothing
from our discussion on how to deal with the dependent, old, and difficult
customer. You should have offered her the latest shades, even if only to
give her the privilege of saying, ‘These are a little bit young for me, don’t
you think, my dear?’ That is her privilege; allow her to use it.

If you offered her the older shades you would indirectly have said to her,
‘Here, you old relic, this is good enough for you.’ In other words, you
would have stood in judgement over age and decided that because she is
old she does not deserve to see the latest. Don’t forget, you could very well
have a real ‘swinger’ in the grandmother who is facing you. Always deal
with these customers as you would deal with anyone else.

Don’t forget PACES; we did not say that buying motives exist in the young,
or middle-aged, or the old. We said they exist in every single person in this
world, regardless of his or her age group.

Children

Young children are included in the category of the dependent customer.
Here the reference is made to that young child, maybe five or six years old,
whose mother has written a note which you can hardly read. She gave
her child a purse with some money in it and told him to take the note to the pharmacy.

Before the child left the house, Mother emphasised two points: Don’t lose the note and be careful with the money. The child grasps the note in his little hand so tightly that by the time he arrives at the pharmacy you nearly have to prise those fingers open to get to the message. You unfold it very carefully and then find to your dismay that you can hardly read it. You turn it upside down, and regardless of which way you view the scribble, you cannot make head nor tail of it.

What would you do under such circumstances? If you were to react in the way an untrained Pharmacy Assistant would, you would address yourself to the child with a silly question like ‘What does Mummy want?’ and the only answer you would get then would be a shrug of the shoulders. Maybe you would persist by asking the question again in a different fashion: ‘Don’t you know what Mummy wants? Surely she must have given you an idea of what she wanted?’

In sheer desperation you might even call your pharmacist to see if he can decipher the writing. He will come out and stand in front of the child, with his hands behind his back, and question the child further. ‘Did Mummy tell you what she wanted? Haven’t you got any idea of what Mummy wants?’ By this time the child is becoming very uncomfortable, even rather scared of the whole situation.

And then the pharmacist may well ask, in order to find out whose child this is, ‘What’s your Mummy’s name?’ The answer normally is ‘Mummy.’ That certainly wouldn’t help you, would it?

‘No, no, no,’ the pharmacist might say. ‘I don’t mean that. What does your father call your mother?’ That young child may divulge an intimacy that exists between husband and wife. Mummy could be called anything by her husband. Some of the things husbands call their wives would embarrass them so much that if they knew that you in the pharmacy knew, they would never return to your shop. So it appears that questioning the child is not going to get you anywhere. Then what should you do?

First of all, do not keep the child in the pharmacy for too long. The longer you detain him, the more worried the mother will become when he is late returning. The best solution is to write a note back to the mother, saying that you could not read her writing. Ask her to phone you and let you know what product she wants, so that you can have it delivered to her.

Another way to deal with such a situation is to ask the child what his name is. One of the first things a child learns when he goes to kindergarten is his
name and his address. This is always taught, so that if a child gets lost, the person who finds him can return him to his parents.

If the child replies with his name and address, you might know his mother or you could look up his surname and then proceed to find out from your records in the pharmacy what the phone number is and immediately phone the other and solve the problem.

Language Problems

Due to the cosmopolitan nature of our community some of our customers who have come to Australia from all over the world might have a language problem. These people are very dependent on you. Language problems can often make these people difficult to understand or to talk to. If you cannot converse with them, remember that they will probably understand some form of sign language. Ask your customer to point to the product she wants. Here you must display a lot of tact, understanding and patience in order to be helpful. Maybe you can find out what language she speaks, and you might even have a Pharmacy Assistant working with you who speaks the same language.

Whatever you do, never correct pronunciation and never laugh at the way our foreign customers pronounce certain words. While you might think English sounds terribly funny when spoken with an Italian accent, I can assure you that Italian sounds equally funny spoken with an English accent. Once again, remember that you are not there to judge, you are there to serve. People who have trouble expressing themselves in the language you speak need your help much more than those who can converse with you. Make a friend of such a person and you have a loyal customer for life, as she will never forget your kindness and your patience, which are all too rare in today’s world.

The Disagreeable Customer

The disagreeable customer makes it necessary for you to have product knowledge, patience, and, above all, a sense of humour. Without a sense of humour when dealing with this type of customer, you are likely to come to the end of your tether by the time the first day is over. You will often find that these disagreeable customers are also sceptical. In this case you need to be candid and very patient.
Inquisitive

First there is the inquisitive customer, the one who asks question after question, who is likely to start getting on your nerves, and who, before long, may even guide you into losing interest in the sale itself. The inquisitive customer, while termed disagreeable, is sometimes the customer who really wants to buy, but gets little response from the Assistant she is questioning. When you have that all-important product knowledge, the inquisitive customer can be a pleasure to deal with. That customer will help you to think about your product and to display the knowledge that you have. The inquisitive customer, through the number of questions she asks, will normally finish up selling herself the products that you are trying to sell to her. She will talk herself into it. Every question asked will help you to tell her more about the product and its advantages, will help you to find out what that person’s need is, and eventually will assist you to choose the right buying motive to clinch the sale.

The inquisitive customer is disagreeable only to the Pharmacy Assistant who has no product knowledge.

Talkative

Talkative customers are also sometimes considered disagreeable because, in many ways, they do waste your time, especially when other customers are waiting to be served. The talkative customer will always be a part of the pharmacy because, over the years, good pharmacies have made people feel free to come in and have long chats with those who work there. These customers discuss their problems, their holidays, their hobbies, and a multitude of other subjects.

Because the pace of living has now increased quite dramatically, we want our customers to change with it. Most people have changed, but only when they walk into other shops; they will not change their habits when they walk into a pharmacy. Naturally, you have to be courteous when dealing with the talkative customer, but you must also be brief in your discussions as you do have other people to serve. Time is money, and the amount of time you spend with a customer must be in direct proportion to the amount of money she will spend in the pharmacy, otherwise you are wasting your selling time.

On the other hand, talkative customers can sometimes give you ideas as to what products they are likely to need in the future. For example, you may be serving a customer with whatever needs she has at that moment, and when that transaction has been completed, the customer may embark on a long story about how she and her family are going to spend their holiday next week. She could tell you whether they are going
on a caravan trip, staying at a hotel, or driving in their own car, towing a caravan. All these facets of their coming holiday may give you ideas about the sorts of products that may be needed by the family.

A talkative customer could sometimes be creating sales for you. As the definition of creative selling stated, your job is to originate and successfully close a sale where no apparent desire previously existed. Listen to the talkative customer, because the art of selling is not just having the gift of the gab, but also the ability to listen. By listening you will pick up clues to hidden needs. You will also think of items that the customer might not consider essential, but with your knowledge of the products you can soon rectify that situation. So remember that talkative customers could be a great source of business to you if you listen to what they have to say. However, if the customer is just relating stories to you, and you have a million-and-one things to do, it certainly is not advisable to maintain such lengthy conversations. You will then have to be extremely tactful in telling your customer that you would love to have a bit more time to talk to her about these things; you are finding it all terribly interesting, but at the moment you have a lot of things to do, so maybe on her next visit to the pharmacy you could have a longer chat. This way you are being courteous as well as brief with your talkative customer.

Insulting

Customers who are insulting are obviously very disagreeable, but you must show self-control and never insult them back. That is very easy to say and very hard to do. No one has ever said that it is easy to show self-control, but the mark of a good salesperson, especially a Pharmacy Assistant, is to be able to control herself at such moments. With practice and experience you will learn how to handle the insulting customer as easily as all your other more pleasant customers.

The Trying Customer

Critical

Critical customers often try our patience to its limits. Some customers always seem to imply that they know more about the product than you do. Others are likely to disagree with your recommendation because they don’t think it will work. They are the ones who really give you the most trouble.

Imagine yourself serving this critical customer. After having turned her general need into a known need, and after having applied your product
knowledge to the product she requires for the condition she is talking about, you are just about to put your hand on a bottle of the product that you have recommended. Then you hear that voice of doom: ‘I’ve tried that before, and it doesn’t work.’

With this comment the customer is being critical of your recommendation. What would your reaction be? Will you drop the product that you are just about to pick up like the proverbial ‘hot brick’ and say something like ‘I’m sorry it didn’t work. What else have you tried?’ Or will you be rooted to the spot not knowing which way to go? Faced with this situation, are you likely to give up and forget the fact that you are the Pharmacy Assistant? The product that you selected met the requirements:

- Is it safe?
- Is it effective?
- Is it value for money?
- Is it chemist-only?

After all that, when the customer criticises your recommendation, will you drop that product and seek another one? If you did react that way, then there would be no need for you to be standing behind the counter. You might as well hand over your uniform to your customer and let her wear it, and allow her to help herself to what she thinks is suitable for her condition. In such situations you have to stand up for your convictions. You have selected a product very carefully and your customer has just rejected that selection.

What you have to do first of all is make sure that she has real grounds for questioning your recommendation. You can easily do this by asking her to relate the symptoms that she had when she first used this particular product.

Secondly, you could ask her whether she took the correct dosage. She could well be the type of customer who cannot convert millimetres to teaspoons and she might not have had a proper medicine measure at home. As a result, she might have taken the wrong dose, and so the product did not work. When you ask questions about the product and its use, you will usually find that somewhere along the line there has been a mistake made by the customer that causes her to reject the product this time. By rectifying that error you will make your sale.
Hypochondriacs

Suppose, however, that all the questions you ask a customer are answered correctly. They used the product as directed and they still insists that it didn’t work. Here we may have a particularly trying type of customer – the hypochondriac.

The hypochondriac is a person who suffers many diseases that are as yet unknown to the medical world. If you said you had a headache, this sort of person would develop one immediately. If you started to develop a toothache, they would have one straight afterwards. This person suffers from fictitious diseases and complaints; they are non-existent. She is not physically ill, for her illnesses are in her mind.

The hypochondriac will never be satisfied with any product that you select off the shelf. Those products are to treat conditions that everybody else has. The customer conditions are special ones, so they require special treatments and special products. This situation is one you can’t handle and your only solution is to call on your pharmacist for help.

When a pharmacist deals with these sorts of customer, he will usually ask them for a list of symptoms. After they have described the condition, the chemist will say something like ‘I can see why these products have not worked for you. It seems to me that I will have to find something specially suited to you. Would you like me to do that?’ The pharmacist will receive the obvious answer: ‘Yes, please.’

The customer believes she has a specific condition that is unique to her and therefore it requires a unique product to treat it. The chemist will retire to his dispensary and before long he will come out with his miracle product. Because he has offered a special preparation to her, it will work, and your pharmacy will have a satisfied customer who will return regularly, for the hypochondriac never lacks yet another ‘illness’.

Indifferent

Another trying customer is the indifferent one. This customer shows no reactions to anything you say. She is so poker-faced that you cannot tell if you are getting through to her. She gives no hint of whether she is accepting what you say or disregarding it completely.

With this sort of customer you need to be persevering and tactful. The problem you face here is that you are likely to lose interest in the sale yourself, because you are getting no reaction. When you lose your enthusiasm the customer can sense it. She becomes aware that you are
Bargain-hunters

Bargain-hunters can sometimes be very trying too. All your products are marked with a certain price, and such customers are likely to accuse you of overpricing a product when they see it down the street for 5 or 10 cents cheaper. If they are genuine in what they have seen, they have every right to tell you about it, and these matters should be reported to your chemist immediately. It could be a situation where you have mistakenly overpriced your products, or your price could be genuine and the other shop has undercut your price. If it is a mistake in your pricing, you can soon rectify that and please your customer. If, on the other hand, it is an undercut price set by the other shop and you cannot meet it, you would be wise to suggest that your customer purchase the product at the other shop.

This is a very good example of a statement that was made earlier: You should prefer to lose a sale and keep your customer rather than make the sale and lose the customer. You lost a sale by sending your customer to buy the product elsewhere, but by losing the sale you have shown your faith in your customer. You have shown her that you are vitally interested in her saving money, and because you did not have the cheaper product, this time you actually sent her to buy the product elsewhere. That gesture alone will develop loyalty towards your pharmacy by that customer, for she will return to you as she realises that you are always prepared to do the right thing by her.

So while bargain-hunters could be called trying customers, just by communicating with them about the price structure of whatever product they are interested in you can always come to a very amicable agreement. Whichever way it goes, if you handle the customer correctly you will never lose her.

Two Friends

One type of customer we have not discussed as yet is the person who normally comes into the pharmacy with her friend and who is easily swayed by her friend’s advice. In this situation you will find that you have two people facing you across the counter, one a customer and one the customer’s friend. You will, obviously, be selling to the customer.

Let’s assume that you have done everything right from the moment you faced your customer across the counter. The customer is just about to
accept your recommendation when her friend nudges her and whispers, ‘Don’t buy that. It’s not much good really.’ In one second flat everything you have achieved as a professional Pharmacy Assistant with this customer will be destroyed by her friend.

Now what would you do? Would you address yourself again to your customer and try to convince her that the product is the right one? Or would you, on the other hand, address yourself to the friend? Don’t forget that the customer was about to accept your recommendation, but it was the friend who stopped her from completing the transaction. A few seconds ago the customer was convinced that the product was the right one. Her friend changed her mind for her, not with an explanation, not with a list of reasons, but rather with just a very short sentence, ‘It’s not much good really.’

Address yourself to the friend. Question her about her use of the product. Did she have the same condition as her friend when she tried this product? Did she take the correct dosage? Was she aware of the ingredients? In this instance you can actually read out every ingredient listed on the label. By doing this you will be, in a way, confusing the friend. You can even ask her, ‘Did you know this product contains cetylpyridinium?’ She probably has never heard of such a drug before, so her answer will most likely be ‘No, I didn’t.’

You only need ‘No, I didn’t’ two or three times for your customer to start to lose a certain amount of faith in her friend’s opinion. In this way, you will find that before long the friend has to redeem herself in your customer’s eyes, and you might finish up selling two of these products rather than just one, for the friend may want to try this product as well.

The Commonsense Customer

It must be remembered that the majority of your customers, perhaps as many as 90 per cent, are commonsense customers. The various other types of customers we have discussed constitute only a small number of the total number of people served. Dealing with the commonsense customer is indeed an enjoyable experience. These are the people in whom you can start looking for the human desires; you can also be assured that their mental steps will be functioning as well as yours and in the same sequence so that you will be able to put forward successfully your planned sales story. You will obviously have to answer a number of questions that require clarification in the customer’s mind, but eventually you will be able to select the correct buying motive and this knowledge will help you to clinch the sale.
Customers Who Need You the Most

Some customers do not fit into any of the previous categories. These are the people who most need the services of a Pharmacy Assistant. They are also the people who will cause you moments of silent laughter, as well as amazement that anyone could be so lacking in good sense. With these customers you will need more patience, tact, and self-control than with all your other customers combined. Over the years, such customers – like the one described below – will be those whom you remember most clearly.

A gentleman came into the pharmacy with a blocked nose and asked the Pharmacy Assistant for something to relieve his condition. The Pharmacy Assistant chose some nose drops, confirmed them with her chemist as being correct, handed them to the customer, and suggested that one or two drops be placed in each nostril every four hours.

He immediately replied, ‘I can’t take drops. They go down my throat and make me gag.’ The Assistant immediately offered the perfect alternative: ‘We have tablets for people who can’t use drops, and they will do exactly the same job.’ And so the customer accepted the tablets. Later that day he came back, complaining bitterly that since he started using the tablets he was much worse. The Assistant asked him what dosage he had taken. He replied he had done exactly the same thing as she had suggested he do with the drops. You will probably find this hard to believe: He had actually stuck one up each nostril! Yes, hard to believe, but true.

The chemist had to clear his nostrils by using a little ear syringe, and then suggested to the customer that since the tablets had not worked when inserted in the nostrils, he should try swallowing them and come back the next morning to let the chemist know how he felt. Sure enough, his blocked nose had cleared up considerably.

You will find that are people who are likely to do such things, and it will be hard not to burst into laughter. However, please wait until your customer leaves the pharmacy; then you can go and hide at the back of the dispensary or in the storeroom and laugh all you want to.

Using Your Analysis

If you are right 80 per cent of the time in analysing your customer, you will be doing extremely well, for this is a part of your work that will improve only through experience. The more you deal with people, the more you will understand people; and the more you study people, the more efficient you will become in handling any sort of person.
Keep your eyes and ears open and use your powers of observation. Look for facial expressions that will give you an idea whether your customer is accepting or rejecting what you are saying. By looking at a customer while talking to her you can pick up her frame of mind and her mood.

It is a challenge you can enjoy daily in a pharmacy, for every customer who walks in is an unknown quantity and you can test your ability with every one of them. It is rewarding to be able to put each customer into the right category and to deal with her successfully.

It is important to remember that pharmacy is a haven from the rat race. In the pharmacy we are there ‘to serve not judge. We do not discriminate. We treat all people in the same way regardless of what nationality – colour of skin – religion or any other difference in people that might exist. All customers to the pharmacy will be given the best of services at all times.
Sell By Suggestion

Earlier you learned that there are two types of selling: simple selling and creative selling. Simple selling is the exchange of goods for money. Creative selling is the ability to originate a buying desire that did not exist when the customer first came into your pharmacy, and to conclude a sale successfully. When you sell creatively you can use a method called suggestion selling. Although suggestion selling is an enormously valuable technique which can more than double sales, it appears to be neglected by salespeople.

To illustrate this point, an experiment was carried out by an American retail organisation. Each of a number of men was supplied with $50 and sent to various departments in several stores to buy an article worth a few dollars. Their visits were made at a time when the stores were not very busy. Their instructions were to buy everything else suggested by the salesperson until the $50 was spent. Not one of these men spent the full amount.

What would the result have been if a similar experiment was carried out in local pharmacies? The answer would simply be ‘exactly the same.’

The Meaning of Suggestion Selling

Suggestion is a mental process which results in the uncritical acceptance of ideas planted in the mind by words, attitudes, or acts of another person. A suggestion is a thought planted into a person’s mind in such a way that she feels it is her own idea she is pursuing and not yours.

Suggestion selling involves the selling of extra merchandise because the customer accepted an idea suggested by the Pharmacy Assistant. Actually, suggestion plays a vital role in all buying and selling processes. Everything you do and say has an effect on the customer. Your appearance suggests the type of person your pharmacy employs. The way you handle merchandise suggests the way you feel about it. Your manner towards the customer suggests your attitude towards her, and so on. Most of our impressions are formed by suggestion. Advertising is also based on this power. A good Pharmacy Assistant makes the best of it.

Suggestions Versus Argumentation

Argumentation is the process of gathering information, reasoning, drawing conclusions, and applying them to the case at hand. It has been found that most buying decisions are based on emotional factors rather
than reasoned conclusions, even though the customer likes to feel that she has made a logical decision. The customer is always impressed by sound reasons for buying an article, and she will quote these reasons to her family and friends if she buys it. But her actual decision to buy the article is most likely made at the time she accepts your suggestion that the purchase would enable her to feel superior to the lady next door or to show her boyfriend what good taste she has.

A man may give considerable thought to buying a new car but his final choice is likely to be based on colour, lines, brand, or associations created in his mind by past experiences, even though he might not realise all this.

What Gives Suggestions Their Forcefulness

The forcefulness of a suggestion – that is, the degree to which it is accepted and uncritically acted-upon – depends upon the following factors:

- The source of the suggestion. Obviously we would accept a suggestion more readily from someone in whom we have confidence than from a person who makes a poor impression on us. The Pharmacy Assistant who lacks sincerity and who appears interested only in making additional sales is heavily diminishing the effect of any suggestions he or she makes.

- The nature of the suggestion. Suggestion is a scientific process. To get the best results it should be applied with knowledge and skill. Good Pharmacy Assistants find out what the customer wants or needs. They know that suggestions along these lines will do much to speed up the sale.

- The type of merchandise. Some types of merchandise are more suited to suggestion selling than others. Merchandise which can be suggested most successfully are necessities and impulse goods that appeal to the emotions. Gifts are a natural for suggestion selling.

How to Make Suggestions

Some people are more susceptible to suggestion than others. We have found that young and old people are usually more susceptible than those in between. The customer’s knowledge of the merchandise counts a good deal. The less a customer knows about it, the more dependent the customer is upon you for help and the more open to suggestion that customer will be.
Tactful suggestions are welcomed, but customers are often irritated and annoyed by suggestions which are unsuccessfully made. Skilful suggestions made in accordance with the following keys will be successful.

- Give acceptable justification for your suggestion. The essential step for a successful suggestion is to convince the customer that she will benefit from it. If a customer feels that your suggestion is made for your benefit and to increase your sales, the suggestion will fall on deaf ears. Make sure you show her how she will benefit from your suggestion.

- Make definite suggestions. Suggestions made must be ‘positive, not negative’. Be specific. Avoid vague suggestions like ‘Could I show you something in sunglasses?’ That is a negative suggestion. Make a definite suggestion a positive one, such as ‘With summer coming you’ll need sunglasses. Look at the benefits of this particular brand.’ It is possible to be definite without being dogmatic or applying high-pressure selling.

- Demonstrate. A good demonstration is particularly important to the suggestion sale. Actions, it is said, speak louder than words. The effectiveness of your verbal suggestion is increased by the evidence of sight and any other sense you can make use of in your demonstration. In the next section of this text, you will learn how to use demonstrations in your selling.

- Stop in time. It is a mistake to carry suggestions too far. The customer should never be given any reason to suspect that you are trying to sell her more than she needs. Your careful judgement is required to decide when no more suggestions should be made, for there is no room for high-pressure selling in Pharmacy.

When you make suggestions which result in the customer buying more and higher priced merchandise than she originally intended to buy, your action is beneficial to the customer, the shop, and yourself in the following ways:

1. It benefits the customer by encouraging her to buy better and more economical merchandise. It also saves her the time that she would spend buying the additional articles when she thinks of them later.

2. It benefits your pharmacy by increasing sales volume and profits. It costs your pharmacy very little more for you to make a large sale than a small one, so the profit on each added sale is proportionately much greater than on the original sale.
3. It benefits you, the Pharmacy Assistant, because it increases your sales volume and makes you a more valuable employee.

When to Make Suggestions

The best time to suggest other merchandise varies with the type of merchandise. As a rule, first satisfy the customer’s request before suggesting other products. Do not try to sell the suggested product along with the product that the customer sought originally. It is best to clinch the sale for the product requested by the client before suggesting the other product.

There are many ways to use suggestion to add to nearly every sale if the Pharmacy Assistant takes advantage of the opportunities.

› Suggest related merchandise: In the pharmaceutical field there are so many associated items that this technique is a natural. For example, when a householder is going on holiday and wants to buy some sunscreen, you should ask whether she requires insect repellent, baby bottle sterilising solution, a beach cap, sunglasses, hair spray, first-aid supplies, etc. It is not unusual for suggested items to cost much more than the original sale. Knowledge of the related products carried in the pharmacy is essential to effectively use this technique.

› Suggest larger quantities: You should always aim to sell as much as possible to each customer. Many customers will buy more if the right suggestion is subtly made. Manufacturers often help you to sell more by packaging their products in different sizes or in multiple packs. Remember how you learned to use the buying motive of Economy. Organise your little notebook, work out the savings, and present the products in such a way that your final selling phrase can always be ‘and by taking the economy size you will save $1.50.’

› Suggest higher priced merchandise: Many customers are glad to pay more if they are shown the advantages of buying better quality merchandise, or if they are made to feel they are getting something special for their money. All customers look for value. They simply need to be able to justify the extra expense to themselves, or their family, or their friends, or all of these. Never criticise quality to justify the price of the more expensive items, and avoid using words like ‘cheap’ and ‘poor quality.’ These words reflect on merchandise sold in your pharmacy, for if you say that Product A is poor quality but Product B is better, you are not saying much for Product B. If you agree that Product A is good value, and state that Product B is even better value, then the customer feels that Product B must be really good value.
for money. What is more, if the customer rejects the higher priced merchandise, she will obviously also reject the lower priced if you have criticised its quality. It is always wise to allow your customer the privilege of purchasing the lower priced article without embarrassment if her budget does not extend to the higher price.

- Suggest new merchandise: One of your duties as a Pharmacy Assistant is to inform or even remind your customers of the arrival of new products. By doing so you will make your customers feel that you are interested in their welfare. At the same time you will be creating opportunities to increase the size of your sales.

- Suggest specials: Many shoppers enter the pharmacy chiefly' to find but what bargains are being offered. Today, more so than ever, this happens on a regular basis, because Pharmacy has become a competitive business with many specials being advertised heavily in the various newspapers. Some chemists even advertise the bargains they offer on television. It is up to you to satisfy your customers, curiosity when they do come in, and to make sales by offering subtle suggestions and mentioning selling points of interest to your customers. Be sure that you know what specials are being offered in your pharmacy and help your customers by pointing out these specials to them, emphasising the savings they can make by buying these products.

- Suggest new uses for merchandise: Many products have more than just one use. Some of these other uses are not widely known, but you should learn these and suggest them to your customers. If a product has more than one use it is obviously of more value to your customers. Every additional use suggested will be well accepted by the customer who is interested in economy.

- Suggest merchandise for special occasions: Special occasions such as holidays, Mother’s Day, Easter, and Christmas give you excellent opportunities to sell more merchandise. By personalising your business you may even be able to find out dates of special occasions that are likely to occur, such as birthdays and anniversaries. This information could open the way to helpful suggestions on your part regarding gifts for these very personal occasions.

The Difference Between Suggestion and Substitution

Most people dislike substitutes but welcome suggestions, and yet there is only a very thin line between suggestion and substitution.
Successful Selling in Pharmacy

Substitution occurs when you try to make the customer buy a certain product instead of the one she wants. This will obviously destroy goodwill, and by selling the product you could lose the customer. Remember that it is best to lose the sale and keep the customer.

Suggestion involves making the customer want what she buys. She will be happy with her purchase and this will help create goodwill.

Suppose that your pharmacy carries two brands of multivitamin capsules. One preparation is slightly better quality than the other and it sells at a slightly higher price. Which of the following is an example of suggestion selling?

EXAMPLE 1

Customer:

I would like a bottle of Black’s Vitamin Capsules.

Assistant:

We do carry Black’s Vitamin Capsules, Mrs Jones, but let me show you White’s Vitamin Capsules. They are much better value for money.

EXAMPLE 2

Customer:

I would like a bottle of Black’s Vitamin Capsules.

Assistant:

Here are the vitamin capsules you asked for. They are a fine product and give some very satisfactory results. But speaking of results, have you tried White’s Vitamin Capsules? They have etc., etc., etc....

Example 1 is definitely an attempt at substitution. The Assistant probably thought she would irritate the customer by attempting to make her buy something she did not want, and so she did not pursue her sales story.

Example 2 is true suggestion selling. Through suggestion, the Assistant will enable the customer to see the advantages of buying the other brand.
Successful Selling in Pharmacy

Suggestion Sales are a Measure of Your Ability to Sell

Many people think that anyone can be a good Pharmacy Assistant because most customers come into a pharmacy with the intention of buying something, and therefore little ability is needed to complete a sale. There is little satisfaction to the good Pharmacy Assistant in such a sale however, and her work becomes a monotonous chore.

Suggestion selling offers you a sales technique that can be developed into a fine art. Your work is always interesting because each transaction offers a challenge to your ability to sell. By concentrating on improving your performance in suggestion selling, you will automatically increase your job satisfaction and your value to the pharmacy that employs you.

When you practise suggestion selling, think of how many products are related to each other, work out savings, and suggest merchandise to your customers with such a positive attitude that they will find it hard not to buy.

An example of a positive attitude is as follows:

A man walked into a health food bar and requested a milk shake from the attendant. The attendant, being a creative salesperson and a positive thinker, asked, ‘With malt or wheat germ?’ This is a positive suggestion. Had the attendant said, ‘Would you like some malt?’ the customer could have just as easily said, ‘No, thank you’ or ‘Yes, please.’ This is an open-ended question, and the attendant could have drawn a negative answer as easily as an affirmative answer.

However, the positive suggestion of the attendant brought about the positive and affirmative reply, ‘Oh, with malt, please.’ The attendant put a positive suggestion into the customer’s mind: You will have either malt or wheat germ in your milk shake. She gave the customer a choice so that he had to accept one thing or the other. So, instead of a simple milk shake, we now have a milk shake with malt.

The attendant, after having clinched the sale for a milk shake with malt, suggested to her client, ‘One egg or two?’ Another positive suggestion. If she has said to the customer, ‘Would you like an egg in your milk shake?’, he could very well have answered, ‘No, thank you.’ Even if the customer hated eggs, if he had been given a choice of one egg or two he would probably have said, ‘Oh, just one, thank you.’
The attendant turned a simple sale of just a plain milk shake into a milk shake with malt and one egg. By using positive suggestions, she sold more to the customer and, as a result, increased the profits of the health food bar.

Positive thinking and positive suggestions are the key to success in selling. Apply these to buying motives and human desires and you will become a creative salesperson and the ideal Pharmacy Assistant, who will always be an asset to her pharmacy and who will enjoy security in her employment.

Use Showmanship in Your Selling

Showmanship in selling is one of the essential factors in selling creatively. When you use showmanship in your selling you give a practical demonstration of the features of the product you are offering to your customer.

Sample packs are particularly useful for demonstration purposes. Many a sale is made by allowing the customer to sample the merchandise. These days, small samples are not as plentiful as they were some years ago as the cost of producing such samples is too high in proportion to the number of additional sales made. It is cheaper for a manufacturer to allow a salesperson to demonstrate with a regular stock item than to produce a special sample as a giveaway, because the cost of printing a label, putting a cap on a bottle, and manufacturing the box for the bottle is about the same for a small sample as it is for the normal size of that product.

When you have decided that a certain product is likely to be the one your customer needs, treat the sample as if it were a new item from the shelf. You must go through your planned sales story, which will include:

1. The name of the product.
2. The composition of the product.
3. The indications.
4. The price.

Give the customer all the required information and allow her to sample the product just as if she were going to buy it. If necessary, and practical, you could give her the sample bottle or tube to take home and try for herself over a period of time; this would, of course, depend upon the type of product and her intended use of it.
When demonstrating a product, you should keep in mind these rules:

1. Do not use too much technical detail. Use words your customer will understand.

2. Select the right words. ‘This product is terrific’ is your opinion. Tell her, ‘It has proved to be effective for dry skin’ – or whatever. Be specific in your comments and keep in tune with your customer’s known needs.

3. Treat each person as an individual. What appeals to one person does not necessarily appeal to every other person. Emphasise the features that you know will appeal to your particular customer.

4. Do not give away samples; sell the sample. We do not mean sell it for cash. Sell it with the words you use in your planned sales story. This also means you should never place a sample in a bag or hand without telling the customer what the product is and what it does.

Through demonstration, a good Pharmacy Assistant can create the need for any product, if the right approach is made to the right customer.

In Pharmacy, when you use showmanship in selling, you appeal to four senses: taste, touch, smell, and sight.

Sense of Taste

In the pharmacy, the sense of taste is appealed to quite frequently. You will find that tablets and mixtures are sometimes claimed by the manufacturer to have a pleasant flavour. Some labels state the flavours of the contents; for example, strawberry-flavoured mixtures or orange-flavoured tablets. You can prove such statements with a demonstration. In some instances, it can definitely be the key to the sale.

The sense of taste, of course, is very much a personal thing. What tastes good to one person can taste like poison to another. Some people drink black tea and love it; others hate it. Some of your friends probably cannot stand milk, while others drink it by the litre. When it comes to mentioning any particular flavour to a customer, you must do this very cautiously. Even when you suggest that the product has a pleasant flavour, you must be sincere about what you say.

If you do not like the so-called pleasant flavour, you must be honest with your customer and state that fact to her. You can do this by saying, for example:

“'The manufacturer claims that this mixture has a pleasant flavour. I personally do not like the taste of it, but then taste is an individual thing and you might like it. Would you care to try it before you buy it?’
If, on the other hand, you happen to like the taste of the product, then say so, but still allow the customer the privilege of finding out whether her taste buds agree with yours.

How do you know what products to demonstrate when appealing to the sense of taste? The products that you would select are the ones whose labels state that the product has a particular flavour. If such a statement is on a product’s label, then the manufacturer must feel that the taste of the product is one of its major features. And if that is so, you should use that selling point in demonstrating the product. It is up to you, then, when preparing your planned sales story about the product, to look for that information which will give you a reason to demonstrate the product.

When appealing to the sense of taste by demonstrating a product, these two points are important:

1. When offering sample tablets, do not put tablets into the palm of your hand and offer them to your customer. The palm of your hand may not be dirty, but it is definitely a very unprofessional way to offer a sample of tablets to a customer. Nor should you tip a few tablets into her hand, for her to take one and return the others to the bottle. You should take the cap off the bottle, put the neck of the bottle on the rim of the cap, tap the bottle with your finger, and shake a couple of tablets into the cap. Allow the customer to take one tablet to try. Return the remaining tablets from the cap directly into the bottle. Do not touch the inside of the cap.

2. When sampling a cough mixture, or any mixture, always use a medicine measure. You may find that if you hand the bottle of mixture to the customer for her to taste, she is likely to take the cap off, put her finger into the bottle, invert it, and then suck her finger. Another customer may put the bottle to her mouth and take a swig. Once a product has been contaminated in either of the two ways just mentioned, you certainly could not use it for any other person. By using the cap or a medicine measure you can safely demonstrate to a lot of people from the same bottle without fear of cross-infection.

The following example will help you to understand how sometimes the sampling of a product can be the key to a sale.

A mother is concerned about the cough that her 6-year-old has developed. You have found out through questioning the mother what sort of cough the child has. You have selected the right product to soothe the child’s cough, and you have taken it off your shelf and are just about to tell the mother all about it. Before you can relate your planned sales story, she tells you, in no uncertain fashion, that her major problem is to try to get
her son to accept any type of mixture. She might even tell you that once when she gave him cough mixture, he spat it out all over her carpet.

This would tell you immediately that one of the most important features and benefits of a cough mixture to this mother would be a taste that would make her son accept it without any hassles. At this point you look at the bottle and see if there is any mention of the flavour. Your opening remarks to the customer would be:

“I don’t think you will have any trouble giving this mixture to your son. The manufacturer claims that it has a strawberry flavour, I’ll get a medicine measure for you and let you give some to your son. If he likes it, there should be no problem at all.”

After the mother has given the child some of this cough mixture and if he accepts it readily, you will find that in most cases you will not even have to relate the planned sales story to her. She will buy the product immediately as she has now overcome the major problem for her child.

You might just say, to close the demonstration, ‘This will definitely stop his coughing and he does like it, doesn’t he?’

Obviously, the same demonstration can be carried out with adults. They are much easier to sell to, because if an adult claims that the mixture is not very palatable, you can speak rationally to her and suggest that the mixture was not meant to taste like a milk shake. It is, after all, an adult medicine, it will work, and that is the most important factor.

What happens if you know from experience, perhaps from trying the mixture yourself, that the taste is absolutely terrible? Should you tell the customer? Yes, you must. Sincerity is essential at all times. Most manufacturers will tell you that the taste of the mixture is not very pleasant. This is normally in the adult range of mixtures; children’s mixtures usually taste pleasant and sweet. In such cases you should tell your customer that the taste of the mixture you have selected for her is not really very pleasant but that the mixture is effective for the condition she wants to treat.

When selling to adults this is the best thing to do. They would prefer that you warned them of whatever taste the mixture has. As adults they can accept it, especially if they know it is going to work, and work satisfactorily.

Pleasant taste or bad taste, you must relate these facts to your customers, for you must be sincere in your approach. Also, do not forget, when appealing to the sense of taste, that taste is a very personal thing; just
because you like it does not mean that the customer will like it too. Allow your customers the privilege of finding out for themselves.

The Sense of Touch

In Pharmacy there are a number of opportunities to use showmanship by appealing to the sense of touch. There are two categories of products in which a demonstration could be the key to the sale.

The first category includes products like soft toys and face washers. In presenting these products to customers you are likely to use such adjectives as soft, cuddly, and smooth. Usually, it is only a matter of allowing the customer to handle the article so that she can feel how soft or cuddly it really is.

The second category includes ointments and cosmetic creams. When discussing cosmetic creams (moisturisers and nourishers) cosmeticians are taught to use such terms as velvety-smooth and light-and-fluffy to describe the product in question. However, words cannot paint an adequate picture of these products. It is far better for you to use a little bit of the cream on the customer’s hand to prove that it is indeed light-and-fluffy or velvety-smooth.

When you are discussing the properties of, say, an analgesic ointment with your customer, you could find yourself using the words ‘vanishing cream.’ In this instance the ‘vanishing’ properties of this ointment mean that it is totally absorbed into the skin and, because of its deep penetration, it relieves muscular aches and pains very quickly. You could mention the term ‘vanishing’ a thousand times to your customer, but that would not demonstrate the penetrating powers of the ointment. You can only apply the ointment to show how it works.

Place a small amount of the ointment on the inside of the wrist or the soft area between the base of the thumb and the index finger and gently massage it into the skin. This will prove to the client that the product you describe as ‘vanishing’ is a product that will penetrate into the tissues.

Please note the areas selected; the hair there does not grow to a length that is normally noticeable. If you apply cream to an area with long hair, the cream will not penetrate the skin so easily. While you are massaging the ointment into the area you should be discussing the other properties of the product until such time as the ointment has been completely absorbed into the skin and the area is no longer sticky. Once all stickiness has disappeared, you should invite your customer to feel that same area herself to prove beyond a doubt that the ointment has completely disappeared into the tissues; she will then understand the
term ‘vanishing cream.’

The Sense of Smell

We use our sense of smell daily, and it influences our decisions quite frequently. For example, when it comes to certain foods, we decide purely by our like or dislike of their aroma whether to eat them or not.

In the pharmacy this same sense helps many customers to make decisions about the purchase of some fairly expensive products, such as French perfumes. Some customers even insist on having a sniff of a cough mixture (or for that matter, any liquid or cream preparation) that they wish to buy. In these cases the actual smell of the products may or may not have an influence on their acceptance.

Obviously, we are more interested in how the sense of smell is to be used when selling perfumes. It is unlikely that any customer will buy a perfume of any kind without first of all smelling it, and you will find it very hard to sell a perfume just by saying it ‘smells nice’.

There is an art to the demonstration of perfumes, an art that is rarely applied by pharmacy assistants. Traditionally assistants use testers when demonstrating perfumes, in the same manner as a housewife uses a can of fly spray or house deodorant. The customer needs only to show an interest, and a mild interest at that, in any perfume, before she finds herself sprayed from head to toe with that particular fragrance.

When a perfume is applied to the skin, a chemical reaction takes place. This changes the smell of the perfume, and because the acid mantle of the skin varies from one person to another, the chemical reaction also varies. When you apply a tester to a customer, you have to allow enough time – 10 to 20 seconds – for the chemical reaction to take place before you can be sure how this perfume will smell on this particular customer.

When a customer wishes to purchase a perfume, you normally give her two, three, or four choices. From this point you can choose the wrong way or the right way to test the perfumes the customer has selected.

The Wrong Way

The pharmacy assistant will proceed to test each one of the four perfumes selected on the customer’s skin. She will show the tester to her customer and then, to demonstrate the smell of this particular perfume, she will spray some on the customer’s wrist. If the customer is not ready to make a decision because she wants to smell the other perfumes that have been
offered to her, then, without any hesitation, the assistant will pick up the second tester and proceed to spray the customer on the other wrist. If a decision is not made even then (and it most likely won’t be), the other two testers will be used in the same fashion – sprayed perhaps on the back of each hand. By this time four chemical reactions have taken place, and a combination of the four scents coming from the customer’s skin is what she will smell. This ‘scent’ obviously will be totally different from the individual smell of each perfume that was sprayed onto the skin. The problem is that it might appeal to her sense of smell. She could decide that the last perfume is the one she wants.

If the assistant agrees to sell her that perfume, then obviously when she uses it by itself the result will be quite different from the scent that she enjoyed in the combination. She will no doubt return to tell the Assistant that the scent is quite different from the one she liked earlier. So the pharmacy has an unhappy customer.

The Right Way

First of all, make sure that you have available a packet of cotton balls. You could place them in an attractive container, to be kept close to the testers on the counter.

When the customer selects the perfume that she would like to test, spray some on a cotton ball, which will absorb the perfume. Even though no chemical reaction can take place, the customer will at least be able to smell the perfume in its true state. After allowing the customer to smell the cotton ball that has been sprayed with the perfume, place the cotton ball next to the tester.

The same procedure is to be followed with all the perfumes your customer wants to smell, so that finally you will have cotton balls lined up next to all the testers you have used. The customer can pick up any one of the cotton balls, smell it and put it back, smell another one and put it back, and continue doing that until such time as she feels she has chosen the right one for herself. With the perfume sprayed on each cotton ball, at no time will the customer be smelling a combination of the perfumes. This allows the customer to choose, say, two from all the perfumes that she chose initially.

Once you have reached this point with your customer you should spray the selected perfumes on her, one on one wrist and one on the other wrist. After the chemical reaction has taken place, your customer can smell one wrist and then the other, to make her final selection without difficulty.
Once the decision has been made and you have completed the sale of perfume to the customer, then, as a public relations gesture, you can give her the cotton balls that have been sprayed with the various types of perfume. You can put them into a paper bag for her and suggest that she might like to place each one in a different drawer of her dressing table. Your customer will be pleased by your thoughtfulness, and you will have found a useful way to dispose of the balls.

This particular method of demonstrating perfumes has yielded some very good sales. Moreover, it helps save a lot of time for both the customer and the Pharmacy Assistant by simplifying selection and avoiding confusion.

Customers are sometimes very reluctant to be sprayed with perfumes. If it turns out to smell awful on a particular customer because of her individual body chemistry, she will hate having to wear it around until she can wash it off. A man especially dislikes being sprayed with perfume when he is selecting a gift for his wife or girlfriend. The cotton-ball routine will prevent any such problems. Above all, your professional method of demonstrating perfumes will be looked upon with approval by your customers and your stature as a pharmacy assistant will be enhanced.

The Sense of Sight

It is possible to appeal to the sense of sight in many ways other than just in your demonstrations. Remember your responsibilities to your position: You have to look the part of the efficient and professional Pharmacy Assistant. From the moment the customer walks into your pharmacy, you are appealing to her sense of sight. When she sees your neat, tidy, and well-groomed appearance, she will feel far more confidence in your pharmacy than when she sees a Pharmacy Assistant who does not know how to look after herself. Your appearance will immediately enhance your chances of being successful in your sales presentations to that customer.

The chances of making sales are improved by the appearance of the shop, or what is commonly referred to as the shop image. The pharmacy must look busy, yet ethical. The shelves must never look empty. The floor should be clean and shiny. The pricing should be neat and methodical. Everything about the shop must indicate efficiency and high principles. All this will say to your customer: This is indeed a professional shop with good products and reasonable prices, and you will be attended by a professional, intelligent Pharmacy Assistant.

Let us apply ourselves now to the demonstration of products when appealing to the sense of sight. In the field of cosmetics this is indeed very important. Without a demonstration, how could you assist your customer in making the correct choice when buying a lipstick?
Successful Selling in Pharmacy

The sale of a lipstick is likely to be one of the longest sales events you’ll ever experience in your career in Pharmacy. The fact that you offer personal service seems to make the customer feel she is entitled to have a very long discussion about what shade of lipstick suits her best. Untrained Pharmacy Assistants, with no knowledge of how to cut down on this time factor and still maintain a professional service to the customer, can at times make the sales of such items a dead loss as far as profitability is concerned. Time is money. The more time you spend on selling an item that shows a minimal amount of profit, the less valuable you are to the pharmacy and to the chemist. It is, therefore, important for the Pharmacy Assistant to know how to demonstrate lipsticks to a customer; not only to help select the desired shade, but also to save time.

The professional Pharmacy Assistant will select no more than three shades when a request is made for a lipstick by her customer. The three shades selected will be those that are the best for her customer, according to the Assistant’s experience as a cosmetician or her training in colour coordination. It is quite wrong for the Pharmacy Assistant to ask what shade is preferred, because she should, due to her training in the cosmetic field, need no help from the customer to select the proper shade. It is only to give the customer the privilege of making the final choice in the matter that the professional Pharmacy Assistant will select three very similar shades and offer them as an opener to her presentation to her customer.

Obviously the customer will not accept the Pharmacy Assistant’s recommendation if she just shows the customer the lipstick and says it is a beautiful shade of red; ‘a beautiful shade of red’ says nothing about the lipstick’s actual colour, so it must be demonstrated.

At this stage, the Pharmacy Assistant often proceeds with the demonstration incorrectly. She will pick up the tester in question and put a stripe of that lipstick on the customer’s hand. If the customer wishes to see the second shade of lipstick that has been offered, she has to endure a second stripe on her hand. And if she then wishes to see a third, fourth, fifth, or sixth shade, the Assistant will find room on that hand until such time as it is completely covered in stripes, and then will possibly start on the customer’s other hand with more stripes to show further shades. This might sound far-fetched, but it happens every day in some pharmacies. Many Pharmacy Assistants still insist on painting their customer’s hands with all the shades under the sun.

Stop to think for a minute. If you were asked to select a colour to paint your bedroom walls, you would obviously go to a paint shop and request a colour chart. Have you ever noticed that the background colour on such a chart is white? The white background shows the difference between
similar colours. If the background were not white, the three, four, or five shades that are nearly identical with only a very small variation in depth of colour would all look the same to the untrained eye of the ordinary customer.

The same principle applies to lipsticks. It is wiser once the three shades, or maybe even four or five shades, are selected by the Pharmacy Assistant – to demonstrate these shades to the customer, not on her hand, but on a piece of white cardboard or tissue paper. It is an accepted fact that, if the Pharmacy Assistant is doing her job correctly when selecting lipsticks for the customer, the colours will be almost identical, with only a very small variation in shade and depth of colour from one lipstick to the other. Because these shades are so similar, it is obvious that the customer is going to be utterly confused about which shade she wants. The more he looks at them, the more similar they look and the harder it is to distinguish one from the other. Faced with this quandary, it is almost certain that she is going to take a long time to make up her mind.

When demonstrating shades of lipstick on a white background, you should allow at least 5 centimetres between each demonstration sample. With that distance between the samples, the customer will be able to pick up even the slightest difference in shade and depth of colour. Once she has made a decision about the shade she likes, it is time to demonstrate that shade on the customer’s skin. It is of no value demonstrating it on your own skin; you might be a fair person and your customer could have a dark suntan. If you have selected a shade to suit a dark complexion, you would not expect it to look at all suitable on your fair skin.

If the customer selects two of the shades from those lipsticks in front of her and still finds it difficult to come to a decision between the two, then both the shades should be tried on the customer, for that is about the only way a final decision can be made.

While it is early in your career to discuss the cosmetic field in depth, it is not too soon for you to know that once a person buys a lipstick, it is up to the Pharmacy Assistant to decide whether the new shade of lipstick purchased by the customer is going to colour co-ordinate with the rest of her make-up. If the customers make-up does not co-ordinate, the Pharmacy Assistant should recommend various cosmetics that will complement the lipstick that has just been purchased.

The sense of sight is obviously easy to appeal to. If the gift area of the pharmacy is properly maintained, it will appeal to the sense of sight and a lot more gifts will be sold.
The baby section can look more interesting and appealing if toys are arranged among the products and maybe a little nursery-style wallpaper is used to back the shelves.

When you feel that you have learned the material to this stage, go on to the questions in Checkpoint 3 over the page.

Please attempt to answer these in the first instance without referring back to your study materials so that you effectively test yourself.
Checkpoint Questions Three

- Please write your answers in the spaces provided.
- Check your answers at the end of this study unit.
- If you have any wrong, go back and review the relevant sections in this chapter.

1) What five categories can most customers be grouped into?
   A. 
   B. 
   C. 
   D. 
   E. 

2) The way to deal with an undecided customer is to make the decisions for the customer. Say whether this statement is true or false.

3) What is a hypochondriac?

4) What does suggestion selling involve in a pharmacy?

5) When does substitution occur?
Overcome Objections

Before you can overcome an objection from a customer, you must first of all determine whether the comment is an objection or an excuse. There can be a vast difference between the two, and, therefore, in the way you handle the situation.

Objection: A valid reason for not wanting to purchase the product you are offering. An objection, once recognised, must be answered briefly and very much to the point. Because the objection is a valid complaint about a product, the Pharmacy Assistant should have no trouble in overcoming such an objection through her product knowledge.

Excuse: A lame effort to give a reason for not wanting to purchase the product you are offering. An excuse is often a little white lie. A customer may give an excuse for rejecting the product you are offering because at that moment she does not have enough money with her for the transaction – not because she does not want the product or because she thinks there is anything wrong with it. Such people, rather than face the embarrassing situation of saying that they do not have enough money, are likely to make an excuse in order to delay the purchase until a later date. An excuse need not be answered immediately. You can agree with an excuse and continue to pile up the advantages of the product being offered. If the customer repeats something that seemed to you to be an excuse the first time, you can rest assured that what you thought was an excuse is indeed an objection which needs to be answered using your product knowledge.

Objections by customers are often interpreted as a firm ‘No’ to suggestions or recommendations. Some Pharmacy Assistants, not unlike most sales assistants, seem to be afraid of an objection. They seem to think that an objection is the end of all discussion with the customer and that a no-sale situation will result automatically. This is definitely not the case. Almost every customer who is interested in purchasing a product will have at least one objection that needs to be overcome before the transaction is complete.

The manager of a large sales organisation once said:

The salesperson does not start selling until the prospect starts objecting. Salespeople are paid for their ability to answer objections.

Your customers’ objections are only natural. You should welcome them, as they provide you with a peephole into your customer’s mind and allow you the opportunity to continue your discussion with the customer. An objection tells you what is stopping the customer from buying.
Ask yourself this question: What is the hardest objection to overcome? The answer is simply: the objection you know nothing about or, perhaps more important, the objection the customer will not tell you about. If you do not know what the objection is, or if you do not know what is stopping the customer from purchasing the product, you cannot find a way to overcome the objection. Often the objection is the key to the sale, for it indicates what feature of the product the customer thinks most important, for example, price.

If customers had no objections whatsoever to any product in the pharmacy, there would be no need for Pharmacy Assistants. Chemists could install vending machines, at a much lower cost than paying wages, and customers could insert the right number of coins and push the right buttons to obtain the product of their choice. Five techniques, discussed below, can help you overcome any objection that you are likely to encounter in your career as a Pharmacy Assistant:

1. Lessen the objection by listening.
2. Convert the objection into a question.
3. Keep your temper.
4. Recognise the validity of the objection.
5. Anticipate objections.

Lessen the Objection by Listening

This is the easiest of the five techniques to use to overcome objections. All you have to do is listen to what the customer is saying, and don’t interrupt. Good salesmanship is more than presenting an appropriate sales story. To be a successful salesperson, the Pharmacy Assistant has to be a good listener.

Assume that a customer in your pharmacy is full of objections. Then imagine that she is in the shape of a balloon and that this balloon has the word ‘objection’ printed on it. At this stage the balloon is blown up almost to bursting point and the word ‘objection’ is at its largest. Pretend that you are holding the balloon and you begin to let the air out very slowly. You will remember from your childhood days that when you let the air out of a balloon, you hear a whistling sound as it slowly shrinks. The whistling sound is the voice of your customer, and the air flowing out of the balloon is the objection of your customer.
The end result is obvious. When the balloon is completely deflated, it is so small and so wrinkled that we cannot even read the word ‘objection.’

When a customer comes in to complain about a product or when a customer is strongly objecting to something that you have just said about a product, just remember the balloon, and listen to your customer – patiently, politely, and with real interest – until she stops talking. Once she has finished, agree with what she has just said to you. ‘Use the ‘Yes, but...’ tactic, and then you can continue by telling her your side of the story, to rectify the situation and overcome the objection.

**Convert the Objection Into a Question**

When this technique is used correctly and with an enormous amount of patience, it is very successful in handling objections. It is a matter, first of all, of reducing what might seem to be a large objection into a lesser objection. The best way to describe this technique is to give you an example of a discussion that could take place between you, the Pharmacy Assistant, and your customer.

Assistant:

*Mrs Jones, these vitamin capsules will be of great help to you. If you take one every day for three months you’ll find, by the end of that time, that you’ll feel much better. These vitamins cost $16.00.*

Customer:

*Sixteen dollars! That is expensive!*

At this stage, the customer is objecting in a very strong manner to the price. Your first task is to reduce her strong objection to a seemingly much weaker objection, and to make her feel that you are on her side. To do this you must ask a question that she will answer affirmatively.

Assistant:

*Yes, it does seem expensive, doesn’t it?*

Customer:

*You bet your life it seems expensive!*

Note the words in your question: seem expensive. The customer’s reply repeated the idea, but what has changed is the fact that she is now
saying that it is not really expensive but that it seems expensive. You have achieved what you set out to do; you have turned a very emphatic objection into a much lesser objection.

Now follow up your first question with another question.

Assistant:

Would you like to know why we are asking such a high price for these vitamins?

Customer:

Yes, come to think of it, I would like to know why they are so expensive.

Now you actually have the customer asking you to explain why these vitamins are so expensive. Armed with your product knowledge, this should be an easy task to perform. In Pharmacy, we are not only sure of the products we are selling, we are also certain of the value we are offering and the prices we are charging. If these vitamins cost $16.00, you can convert that amount into a much lower amount by working out what it would cost the customer on a per day basis. If there are 100 vitamin capsules in the bottle for $16.00 and the customer takes one a day, it is obvious that she will have approximately three months’ supply for 16 cents per day. This is indeed a small price to pay for making a person feel better.

As you can see, you have to handle this objection with patience and a three-stage plan:

1. Break down the objection into a lesser objection.
2. Follow through to the stage where your customer asks you to explain why the price is so high.
3. Break down the total price of the product into a daily price, which then makes it a small price to pay for better health.

Keep Your Temper

Once you are a Pharmacy Assistant and once you have that all-important product knowledge, you will find that some of the objections your customers make are so ridiculous that you are likely to lose your temper. This happens because you know your products so well that your customers’ objections seem trivial to you. What you must realise is that the customer may know nothing about the product. You must also remember that although some objections may seem ridiculous to you,
your customer is usually genuinely curious about some aspect of the product and needs to be given more product information.

So take objections with the respect they deserve. The customer is entitled to ask any question about the product, and whether it seems stupid to you or requires only a simple answer, it is important to that customer.

Learn to keep your temper. It does require a certain amount of practice. Some people lose their tempers more easily than others, but in the world of Pharmacy, tempers must be kept in check at all times. Your customers need your help and you certainly will not be of much help if you are going to flare up at the first set-back to your presentation.

Recognise the Validity of the Objection

This simply means that you must find out if it is an objection or if it is an excuse. How can you do this?

There is no need to answer an objection or an excuse immediately. You can disregard it, or you can say ‘Yes’ to it and continue to enumerate the advantages. If it is an excuse, the customer may become so interested in the advantages of the product that she will forget all about her excuse. On the other hand, if it is an objection, then no matter how many advantages you point out, the customer will still remind you of her question.

In other words, an excuse should only pop up once in your discussion with a customer. By agreeing with the customer and maintaining the flow of your presentation to the customer, she will forget the excuse. If the same question is asked twice – if the ‘excuse’ pops up a second time – you know it is not really an excuse. It is a valid objection that must be answered fully, but briefly and without aggression, using your product knowledge.

Anticipate Objections

When you anticipate objections, you try to answer the objection before it is even raised by your customer. An objection that keeps cropping up every time we make a sales presentation is called a repeater. Repeaters normally occur when you first introduce a new product into your pharmacy. You will find that at some stage during your presentation many of your customers will ask the same question about a new product. Therefore, make sure that, in your next presentation of that product to a customer, you include the answer to that question in your planned sales story.
Here is an example of how this can be done:

Let’s assume that you have been selling a product for over a week now and have found that whenever you come to the price factor in your presentation every second customer objects to it. You may recall that your planned sales story included the name of the product, the composition of the product, the indications for the product, and the price. You soon realise that the price is the stumbling block in your sales story. It is the factor in your sales story in which your customers seem to be vitally interested. If you continue to present the product in exactly the same fashion, you will achieve very little in overcoming your customers’ objections to the price.

The way to anticipate those objections is to rearrange your sales story. You will still mention the name of the product, its composition, and its indications, but rather than say, ‘This is $18.50, Mrs Jones,’ you can say, ‘This preparation seems rather expensive at $18.50, but it isn’t really, because it’s safe and effective and, in the long run, it’s very economical as well.’

Use Objections to Your Advantage

An objection is really an opportunity for the Pharmacy Assistant to discuss a product more fully with a customer. You need never be afraid of an objection because you have the product knowledge necessary to answer any questions about your products.

Some of the smallest words in the English language are the strongest words you can use to open discussion with your customers:

- Yes
- But
- How
- Where
- When
- What
- Why

Use the word ‘but’ often when dealing with objections. Do not answer aggressively or antagonise your customer. Avoid arguments. A good way to use ‘but’ when dealing with objections is: ‘I can see why you feel that way, but...’ and then give a clear, complete, and competent answer. Agree with the customer and then give a good reason why the product is useful or better.
Sometimes you can turn an objection into an advantage.

Customer:

*This bottle is too large.*

Assistant:

*That is why you save so much when you buy this size.*

Do not mention other products when handling objections unless your customer does so.

Customer:

*I paid only $2.40 for a similar product just a few weeks ago.*

Assistant:

*Yes, that’s quite possible, but we recommend this one because we know it is more effective as it contains ______ and it will save you 50 cents.*

There is one thing you must always remember when handling objections. If you have recommended a certain product to your customer because it is effective, safe, value for money, and chemist-only, there should be a minimum of objections for you to answer. In other words, if you do your job correctly in the first place by satisfying the customer’s need with the right product, the number of objections should be negligible.

The more objections you get, the more information you need to add to your sales presentation to your next customer.

**Close the Sale**

The closing of a sale is extremely important; it is the ultimate moment in your sales presentation.

One of the easiest things to do is to talk your customer into a sale, and then talk her straight out of it. The sale is lost and, even worse, a customer can be lost. If you are to keep your customers, they must believe that they have been sold the best merchandise for their needs within their price range.

Repeatedly, Pharmacy Assistants competently and effectively present their merchandise to their customers, but fall apart through lack of courage.
when it comes to asking for the money. Remember that it is always easier to tell someone something than it is to ask for something, and customers, in many instances, need to be helped over the hurdle of parting with their money.

Closing the sale does not involve trapping the customer, nor does it rely upon gimmicks. Good Pharmacy Assistants use a number of techniques to close a sale:

1. Use a trial close.
2. Imply ownership.
3. Offer a choice.
4. Narrow the choice.
5. Request the customer to buy.
6. Close with buying motives.

Before we discuss the six techniques used to close a sale, let us be sure that your attitude at the moment of closing the sale is that of a competent Pharmacy Assistant. You, the Pharmacy Assistant, must believe in your products and above all in yourself. If you believe in the products and in your ability to satisfy your customer’s needs, then you will face the last few minutes of closing a sale with the utmost confidence. This confidence must be so contagious that the customer who is buying from you feels completely satisfied that the product will fulfil her specific needs at the right price.

Some assistants believe that there is one particular time during the presentation when a good salesperson should try to close the sale. This is obviously not correct. The closing of a sale starts as soon as you come face to face with your customer and it must be your aim throughout the sales presentation. You must be probing into your customer’s mind and looking for reactions as you enumerate the advantages of your products. The reactions that you are able to see or even feel will help you to decide that the time is right to ask for the money.

These feelings or vibrations will only come with experience. After you have been working for a short time in your pharmacy, you will start to recognise the ‘symptoms,’ as they might be described, that will tell you loud and clear that your customer is ready to part with her money.

Every one of the six techniques listed above is, in its own way, a trial close. You might find that when using the first technique to close the sale, your
customer is likely to respond immediately and before you know it you are wrapping the purchase, thanking the customer, and saying goodbye. On the other hand, it is quite possible that you might use two or three of the six techniques without success. This obviously means that you have to try four, five, or even all six of the techniques before you close the sale.

The many attempts you may have to make to close a sale can be compared to the number of patrols a good general will send out to prod the defences of the enemy. If he were to send just one patrol, it might not find the weaknesses in his enemy’s lines which would enable him to break through and win his battle. So, rather than just one patrol, he will send a number of patrols to different sections of the enemy’s lines. Then the general will be able to assess the situation fully and decide where to attack to his best advantage.

The same applies to you as a Pharmacy Assistant. By using several trial closes (patrols) you will eventually detect the weakness in the customer’s decision to buy. By labelling that weakness and then overcoming it you will eventually close the sale, and your customer will part with her money, not reluctantly but gladly, as you have fulfilled her needs.

Let us now look at each technique and examples of its use.

**Trial Close**

Suppose the customer is already sold on the product. You simply say, ‘That will be 75 cents, Mrs Biggs.’ She hands over the money and that is that. If there is the slightest hesitation on her part, then you can bring other techniques into play.

Another way that the trial close can be used is shown in the following example:

A customer comes in and asks you for a 120 film. You may assume that if the customer requests a 120 film she intends to buy it. But wait! Do you remember that in Pharmacy you can assume nothing? You cannot assume that the customer intends to buy the film she has requested. For all you know, she might want to see the sort of packet, it comes in, or she might want to read the directions on it because she has lost her packet. If you assume nothing, you must make some attempt to ensure that your customer wants to buy the film. You can do that quite easily by using the trial close.

Customer:

*I would like a 120 film, please.*
Assistant:

*One or two?*

By asking if she wants one or two films, you are actually trying to get your customer to commit herself to buy. If she says, ‘Just one, please,’ then you know your customer has committed herself to buy one film and you have closed your sale for the one film. If, on the other hand, the customer says she might as well have two, then you have doubled your sale just by trying to close it.

As you can see, the trial close is very simple to use. It is purely a matter of getting your customer to commit herself to buy a product and of ascertaining that she intends to pay for it.

**Imply Ownership**

This technique can often be used with great success. You actually imply that the customer has purchased the product, has used it, and is feeling the benefits that she expected from such a purchase. The following example shows how this technique can be used successfully.

**Customer:**

*I didn’t sleep a wink last night. This harsh, nagging cough kept me awake.*

**Assistant:**

*This cough mixture will stop you coughing. It contains the ingredients necessary to relieve you of your nagging cough as well as being quite palatable. Imagine, Mrs Smith how nice it will be tonight after you have taken your last dose at bedtime: you’ll be able to sleep all night without interruption.*

The clinching closing phrase in this example is ‘imagine how nice it will be tonight.’ The word ‘imagine’ has suggested ownership already; she has purchased the mixture, taken that last dose at bedtime, and slept all night. Her imagination is likely to dwell on the prospect of such a wonderful night’s sleep. That in itself could be enough to make her want to part with her money cheerfully and gladly to achieve her much-needed rest.
Offer a Choice

The technique of offering a choice in order to close is often used when the product that is being presented to the customer comes in more than one size. It is of greatest value when a product comes in only two sizes. In this instance, when a customer asks for such a product, you will obviously tell your planned sales story, and at its conclusion you will try to close the sale by mentioning that the product comes in two sizes: the smaller size is $1.20, but if the customer takes the larger size, she will save herself approximately $1.10. You have offered your customer a choice between two sizes, pointing out the considerable economy in buying the larger size.

You may also offer a choice when there are two products that are similar in many ways. One could even be a cheaper version of the other one. By offering this choice you make it easier for the customer to select the one that she is better able to afford. This technique is also referred to as the alternative sale. You are suggesting to the customer that if one product does not suit her, for whatever reason, maybe this other one will.

Narrow the Choice

This technique is used when a product is available in more than two sizes. For the purpose of the following example, let us assume that you are offering a product that comes in three sizes. You may be lucky enough to have a customer who chooses one size without further ado, in which case you would have closed the sale by using the previous technique of offering a choice.

On the other hand, the customer might have some difficulty in choosing one of the three sizes. This is where you can narrow the choice to assist in closing the sale.

Assistant:

This product comes in three sizes, Mrs Jones, but I suppose that you intend to put the whole family on these vitamin capsules?

Customer:

As a matter of fact, I will be encouraging the family to take these vitamins. We might all need to take them.
Assistant:

Under the circumstances I don’t think that the small size would be economical for you. I would recommend the medium or large size. As you can see, the medium size contains enough for the whole family, but do consider the largest size. You save $2.45 when you purchase that quantity.

Here you have offered a choice between three sizes, and then you have dismissed one size as being too small for the whole family. That has narrowed the choice to two and then you have gone on to emphasise the considerable saving made by buying the larger of the two sizes. You have led the customer into narrowing her choice down until she chooses one particular size – the largest size, which is the most economical and convenient size for family use.

The pharmacy products that most often require the technique of narrowing the choice are in the cosmetic department. Earlier we discussed how to sell a lipstick without wasting too much time demonstrating various shades to the customer. Having shown the customer three different shades of lipstick that you feel would suit her complexion, you should proceed to narrow the choice from three to two. The emphasis should then be on the one shade out of the remaining two. For example: ‘This shade matches the dress you are wearing to the wedding much better than the other shade I showed you.’ By narrowing the choice from three to two and then from two to one, you can close the sale efficiently and quickly.

The two techniques of offering a choice and narrowing the choice are often used together. It is best to think of them as two separate techniques, but it is important to be able to use them together when the occasion arises. When you offer a choice and narrow a choice, you are really giving your customer the privilege of final selection, or so it seems. The fact that you are offering alternatives could also make the customer feel she is making the final decision in the matter. That in itself is a plus factor in any transaction. Every customer likes to think that the final purchasing decision is made by her and not by the Pharmacy Assistant.

Request to Buy

You will reach a stage in your presentation when you will feel confident that you have answered all your customer’s objections. If, at this stage, you feel quite sure that there is nothing more you can say about the product but, at the same time, you notice that your customer has not indicated in any way whether she is really going to buy the product, then this is the time to use the request-to-buy technique.
You can do this quite easily by asking a question similar to the following: ‘Shall I wrap it up for you, Mrs Jones?’ or perhaps, ‘Shall I charge it to your account, Mrs Henderson?’ Another question that implies a direct request to buy is ‘Would you like us to have it delivered?’ However, if you’re really confident, you can say, ‘That will be $3.50, thank you.’

The direct request to buy is used with a customer who gives no indication whether she wants the product. You may also find that you have no more to tell the customer about the product without repeating what you have already said, which is in itself a danger because you could talk her out of the sale by overdoing your presentation. What you need at this moment is a commitment from your customer. Either ‘Yes, I do want to buy,’ or ‘No, I don’t want to buy.’ And now is the time to take the bull by the horns and use the phrases mentioned previously: Shall I wrap it up? – Shall I charge it? – Would you like it delivered? – That will be so many dollars and cents. What you are really asking is ‘Do you want it or don’t you? Please make up your mind right now.’

Close with Buying Motives

This means close with PACES: Pride, Affection, Comfort, Economy, and Security.

The last sentence or phrase that you use in your planned sales story should be based on the buying motives. An example of each one of these five motives and how to use them in closing a sale will clarify this point.

Let us assume that at this stage you have gone through your planned sales story – the name of the product, what is in it, how it works, what it is used for, and its price. You have spoken to your customer about the product’s great number of benefits, but even after all this your customer has given no indication that she will purchase the product in question.

You could close with Pride by saying to the customer:

Mrs Jones, this lipstick shade suits you perfectly. You’d think it was made just for your complexion.

If you were closing with Affection your comment could be:

The gift you have chosen will be just right for your husband. I’m sure he will love it.

To close with Comfort you might say:

This will stop your cough and give you a good night’s sleep.
If you want to close the sale with the buying motive of Economy, your final phrase could be:

*You will save $5.50 by buying the large size.*

And Security:

*This bottle sterilising solution is really safe for your baby.*

As you can see, when closing with buying motives the right words are of the utmost importance. Unless that final phrase appeals to one of the five major buying motives, it will not serve its purpose at all. At this stage you have finished describing the product’s benefits. What you are looking for is the real reason your customer will want to pay money gladly for it.

It is wise to keep some strong selling points up your sleeve to use in this last effort to close the sale. Perhaps price (Economy) is an important feature for the customer. Maybe the mention of a lay-by purchase will clinch the sale. There are literally thousands of phrases that can be used to close a sale with buying motives.

**Practise Your Closing Techniques**

The closing of a sale, as was mentioned earlier, is the ultimate moment of a Pharmacy Assistant’s efforts in presenting a product. If you are successful in closing a sale in 80 per cent of your presentations, you can take your place with the most successful salespeople in the world.

The only way you will become expert at this part of your work is by sheer practice. Practise closing phrases as often as you possibly can. Imagine situations that are likely to arise with your customers Think of phrases that will assist you in using every technique with many different kinds of customers.

Keep on closing sales and you will be ensuring better profits for your pharmacy and greater job security for yourself.
Checkpoint Answers

Checkpoint One

1) A. simple selling
   B. creative selling

2) A known need occurs when a customer knows exactly what product is required for a problem, whereas a general need occurs when a customer is aware of having a problem but is not sure what product is needed to relieve the problem.

3) A. what the product is used for
   B. the ingredients
   C. the recommended dosage or application

4) A chemist-only product is the type of product that is only available from pharmacies.

5) A. Ask the chemist and the senior pharmacy assistant.
   B. Ask the sales representatives.
   C. Read labels while dusting shelves.
   D. Refer to reference books.

6) A. the product’s name
   B. the product’s composition
   C. the indications
   D. the price

Checkpoint Two

1) people

2) A. Admit the need for something.
   B. Decide that a product will fit the need.
   C. Go to the right source.
   D. Agree on the price.
   E. Want to buy at this time.

3) symptoms

4) security
good health
curiosity
pleasure
possession
sex and romance
recreation
solitude
imitation
love and affection
recognition
comfort
5) pride
    affection
    comfort
    economy
    security

Checkpoint Three

1) A. the nervy customer
   B. the dependent customer
   C. the disagreeable customer
   D. the trying customer
   E. the common sense customer

2) True

3) A hypochondriac is a person who suffers from fictitious diseases and complaints which exist only in the mind.

4) Suggestion selling involves the selling of extra merchandise because the customer accepted an idea expressed by the pharmacy assistant.

5) Substitution occurs when a salesperson tries to make a customer buy a certain product instead of the one the customer wants to buy.
When you feel confident that you have thoroughly mastered the material in this unit, attempt the following assignment.

Transfer your answers to a Multiple Choice Assignment Express Card. Make sure you have included the assignment number and your personal details, including your student number on the card, before mailing your assignment to Cengage Education.

1) The pharmacy assistant can determine whether or not a product is effective for a particular condition by:
   - A selling the customer a product to see if it treats the condition
   - B reading the label for the composition and use of the product
   - C reading the label for the recommended dosage or application
   - D checking the label for caution notices

2) A general need can be turned into a known need by:
   - A trying out several different products
   - B recommending the right product
   - C finding hidden needs in the customer
   - D questioning the customer

3) The exchange of money for a product is called:
   - A creative selling
   - B high-pressure selling
   - C simple selling
   - D selling skills
4) The presentation of a product in a way that will interest the customer is known as:
   A  a planned sales story
   B  product knowledge
   C  a canned sales story
   D  creative selling

5) When a customer asks for a product by name, this is to satisfy a:
   A  hidden need
   B  general need
   C  specific need
   D  known need

6) Usually, the information necessary for a planned sales story can be obtained quickly from the:
   A  chemist
   B  customer
   C  Prescription Proprietaries Guide
   D  product's packaging

7) The selling skills required of a pharmacy assistant involve:
   A  high-pressure selling
   B  skilful and subtle guidance of the customer
   C  the application of elaborate rules and techniques
   D  persuasion so that customers buy more than they need

8) Each selling point in the presentation of a product should:
   A  Appeal to reason.
   B  Point out the advantages of the product.
   C  Match one or more buying motives of the customer.
   D  Demonstrate the product’s value for money.
9) Human needs are:
   A largely the same for all
   B different in each person
   C part of an individual’s image
   D changeable

10) The only human desire that could mean different things to different people is:
   A security
   B possession
   C imitation
   D recognition

11) The true human being can be seen in the:
   A emotions and feelings
   B 12 human desires
   C protective veneer
   D personality

12) The statement: ‘A course of these vitamins will help to give you more energy’, appeals to the buying motive of:
   A pride
   B affection
   C comfort
   D economy

13) What is really being sold in a pharmacy is:
   A product
   B PACES
   C service
   D satisfaction
14) Elderly customers require:
   A special treatment
   B respect and gentleness
   C old-fashioned products
   D speedy service

15) When demonstrating lipsticks to a customer, the pharmacy assistant should first:
   A Ask the customer to choose two shades.
   B Try them on her own hand.
   C Try them on the customer’s hand.
   D Try them on a white background.

16) When serving a tired and cross customer, the pharmacy assistant should:
   A Ask: ‘What is the matter?’
   B Ignore the customer.
   C Be patient, tactful and considerate.
   D Treat the customer in an offhand manner.

17) Categorising customers helps the pharmacy assistant to:
   A Handle each customer in an appropriate way.
   B Treat all customers in a similar manner.
   C Sell the most expensive items within a customer’s means.
   D Identify a customer’s weaknesses.

18) An idea planted in a person’s mind in such a way that the person thinks the idea is his or her own idea is called:
   A a decision
   B an impression
   C a suggestion
   D a reason
19) When demonstrating a product, the pharmacy assistant should:

A  Use a lot of technical detail.
B  Always give his or her own opinion of the product.
C  Appeal to the senses.
D  Always give customers a sample to take home.

20) Most buying decisions are based on:

A  reasoned conclusions
B  logic
C  economy
D  emotional factors

21) A pharmacy assistant who tries to sell a customer a certain product instead of the one the customer wants is attempting:

A  suggestion selling
B  substitution selling
C  creative selling
D  simple selling

22) Should a customer reject a product you recommend, you would be wise to:

A  Make sure there is a good reason for it.
B  Suggest something else.
C  Apologise.
D  Suggest that you know best.

23) When demonstrating several lipsticks to a customer, the most suitable technique to close the sale is to:

A  Attempt trial close.
B  Imply ownership.
C  Narrow the choice.
D  Ask the customer to buy.
24) When a pharmacy assistant asks: ‘Shall I wrap it up for you, Mrs Smith?’, the technique used to close the sale is to:
   
   A. Undertake a trial close.
   B. Imply ownership.
   C. Ask the customer to buy.
   D. Close with buying motives.

25) The objection that is the most difficult to overcome is:
   
   A. an excuse
   B. an objection to the price of a product
   C. a valid objection
   D. an unspoken objection