

- SALESMANSHIP

a learning element for staff of consumer cooperatives

international labour office, geneva

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by Gert Hansson



MATCOM
Material and techniques for cooperatives management training

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In collaboration with cooperative organizations and training institutes in all regions of the world, MATCOM designs and produces material for the training of managers of cooperatives and assists in the preparation of adapted versions for use in various countries. MATCOM also provides support for improving the methodology of cooperative training and for the training of trainers.

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SALESMANSHIP

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PREREQUISITES

To benefit from this MATCOM Learning Element, you should:

- have some retail shop experience.

HOW TO LEARN

- Study the Element carefully.
- Give written answers to all the questions in the Element. This will help you not only to learn, but also to apply the knowledge in your work at a later stage.
- After studying the Element on your own, discuss it with your instructor and your colleagues, then take part in the practical exercises organised by your instructor.

TRAINER'S NOTES

are available for this Element. See the Trainer's Manual.

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INTRODUCTION

You are a SALESMAN. Always ready to serve your customers, always ready to SELL

You need wait no longer, for here comes a customer. Mrs Green is entering the shop. Are you ready?



You: Good Morning, Mrs Green, how are you?
Customer: Very well, thanks.
You: What can I do for you, Mrs Green?
Customer: I'd like a packet of Crown biscuits, please.
You: I'm sorry, but they're out of stock.
Customer: Oh no! What a pity! What shall I do now?
You: I'm really sorry, Mrs Green, but I think they have Crown biscuits in the shop across the street.
Customer: Thank you. I'll try there. Good bye.

So, you are a SALESMAN? But you did not manage to sell anything to Mrs Green. Are you a bad salesman?

Do you want to try again? Very well.

You: Good Morning, Mrs Green, how are you?
Customer: Very well, thanks.
You: What can I do for you, Mrs Green?
Customer: I'd like a packet of Crown biscuits, please.
You: Well, I'm sorry, but Crown biscuits are out of stock today, but we do have some other nice biscuits.
Customer: Well, I need some for this afternoon, some neighbours of mine are coming over for tea.
You: Then I suggest you try these. They're a bit sweet but I'm sure that your neighbours will like them.
Customer: Really, how much are they?
You: Same as Crown.
Customer: Then I'll try them. Thank you.

That was better!
You are a SALESMAN,
after all



"A Good Salesman" - in our trade we often hear that said about some of our colleagues. What do we actually mean by a "good salesman" and the expression "salesmanship"?

The examples above have given us a first, basic explanation. The "bad salesman" does not care whether he helps the customer or not. He is not really interested in selling anything. The "good salesman", on the other hand, always tries to help customers and he often succeeds in selling something.

To be successful, a private trader must be a good salesman. Selling is how he makes a living. The more he sells, the more money he earns, because all the profits go into his own pocket.



Now, what about you, the salesman in a co-operative shop? Your job is also to sell but a co-operative salesman is not like a private businessman trying to make a profit from the distribution of consumer goods. His aim is quite different.



What are the aims of a co-operative society? Write either T (for True) or F (for False) in the box after each statement.

A co-operative should supply the goods the members need.

A co-operative should sell the goods at fair prices.

The surplus (the "profit") from a co-operative should go back to the members, because they are the owners of the business.

The members expect to save money by shopping in their own store.

So, the question is: Do we really need good salesmen in co-operatives?

The job seems so simple - just to provide what the members ask for, not to persuade them to buy anything. We want to help the members save money. Is this not the way to achieve the aims of a co-operative?

Well, the job is not that simple. In the examples above we saw that only the good salesman helped the customer find what she needed. The bad salesman suggested the customer go to another shop, where she may have had to pay more.

So, if co-operative salesmen are poor salesmen, the customers may turn to other suppliers.

And you know what happens to a shop when the customers go elsewhere. The stock range and the services get worse. The business declines as more and more customers turn to other shops. It is a vicious circle. Eventually, the shop may go out of business.

There is only one way of preventing this. If we want the Co-operative Movement to become strong, if we want to have an influence on the prices and the distribution of consumer goods in general, then



Do you agree with the following statements?
Write either T (True) or F (False) in the
box after each one.

To be successful, a co-operative
needs excellent salesmen.

"Selling" is the main job of the
assistants in a co-operative shop.

You should aim at becoming the
best salesman in your area.

How to be a good salesman

You have been chosen for an important job. It is an interesting and stimulating job, but only if you know how to do it.

To know the "art of salesmanship", as some people call it, means knowing:

- the customers
- yourself
- the sales process
- the goods

Compare with the list of contents on page 1.

YOUR CUSTOMERS

As members of the Co-operative Society your customers are part-owners of the shop. You work with them, for their benefit. This is the most important thing for you to remember.

Now, let us look at some of your customers.

Mr Ally can never make up his mind. He has been looking at that kerosene lamp for a month now. Is he going to buy it or not?

Mrs Brenda is still very shy, although you have known her for two years. She comes to the shop every day, but hardly says anything.

Mrs Clark buys a lot in the shop. Maybe too much ... Careless with her money.

Mr David is like a sergeant major. Sometimes he starts ordering people around in the shop.

Mrs Ellington is very worried that you may charge her too much. She checks and rechecks your calculations



Yes, although most of your customers are very "ordinary" people, they all have very different personalities, and you must manage to get along with all of them for yours and the members' sakes. By getting along with all these different people, you make them like the shop. A poor salesman might not be able to do this.

Members enjoy coming to your shop because you:

- always give efficient service
- are honest and fair to everybody
- are nice and pleasant to everybody.

Of course, knowing the customers as well as you do makes it easier to treat them in the right way. A salesman who knows the personality of each one of his customers will probably be the most successful salesman in the world.

No salesman can ever achieve that. On the other hand, only a small part of the customer's personality is of interest to you as a salesman, that is, his behaviour in the shop; his behaviour towards you, the salesman.

The Customer and You

When Mrs Green entered the shop, she had a good reason (page 3). At first, you thought her reason was that she needed Crown biscuits. Then you found the real reason - she needed something for the afternoon tea.

A CUSTOMER ALWAYS COMES TO THE SHOP TO <u>SATISFY A NEED</u> . YOUR JOB IS TO DISCOVER AND SATISFY THAT NEED! ONLY WHEN YOU FULLY UNDERSTAND THIS WILL YOU BE A GOOD SALESMAN.
--

And what a difference this can make to you! You are completely familiar with your stock range. You know, for instance, that you have 6 or 8 different things in stock which would satisfy Mrs Green's needs.

And remember, if you - in the Co-operative Shop - are not able to help customers to get what they need, another salesman in another shop will. You know the consequences.

More about the Customer's Needs

Customers come to your shop because they have certain needs and wishes. Many of them know exactly what they need, but some, like Mrs Green, cannot do without your help and advice.

Of course, nobody can buy everything he wants. For instance, Mr Ally has the money, so why does he not buy that lamp? Why does Mrs Clark, who is not as rich as Mr Ally, spend so much money in the shop? What is it that makes people buy?



Think of the behaviour of Mr Ally and Mrs Clark, and then try to write down - in a few words - the factors which determine what we buy.

Some people spend their money on better food, while others buy cheaper food just to be able to buy a nicer dress. Others save their money for their children's education. People are different.

For all of us, however, money is limited. Money should have been the first word you wrote in the box above (or a similar word). People may agree on this point but seem to have different ideas about what they need; it depends on their way of thinking. Let us simply call it personality. (Have you written something like that above?)

THE SALESMAN

Talking about the customers leads us back to your job as a co-operative salesman. Whatever the personalities of your customers, you are supposed to help them in satisfying their needs.

You do not necessarily want the members/customers to spend more - that is not the aim of a co-operative. But you do want to increase the sales of the co-operative shop.

How do you solve this problem? Well, if you can make all the customers come to you to buy what they need, you will succeed. The members' loyalty means a lot to the shop and to the Co-operative Movement. You will only win this through true co-operative salesmanship, helping the members to buy wisely.

We know that customers can be difficult to understand, but what about salesmen? They, too, are individuals with personalities of their own.

Let us study the behaviour of some salesmen, taking two extremes:

A customer enters the shop.

Salesman: -
Customer: Good morning.
Salesman: Morning.
Customer: I'd like two litres of milk, please.
Salesman: Sure. (putting the milk on the counter)
Customer: And some butter please.
Salesman: Out of stock.
Customer: What? Why is it out of stock?
Salesman: How should I know?
Customer: That's too bad.
Salesman: -

Customer: I'd also like to buy a shirt.
Salesman: -
Customer: (Beginning to lose her temper) Do you sell shirts?
Salesman: Sure. Over there. (Pointing to a shelf)
Customer: Do you have a blue one? Large size?
Salesman: They're all over there. I don't know.
Customer: (Angry) You can keep your shirts. I am going somewhere else.
Salesman: -



You will agree that this was not good salesmanship. We could describe this extreme case as "the passive type" of salesman. He will give the customer what he asks for - if it is not too much trouble. He is not in the least interested in selling; he is simply not a salesman.

It is very bad for a co-operative shop to have passive salesmen.

Now, let us take a look at the other extreme:



Salesman: Good morning, Madam. How are you today?

Customer: Oh, fine, thank you. I'd like two litres of milk, please.

Salesman: Here you are, Madam. I'd make it four litres if I were you, tomorrow it may be out of stock.

Customer: But...but I only need two litres today. The rest won't be fresh tomorrow.

Salesman: This milk will be fresh tomorrow, I tell you. You take four litres.

Customer: (Feeling uncomfortable) But, bbb...

Salesman: (Interrupting)... No! No! Four litres it is.

Customer: And butter, please, one packet.

Salesman: Butter's out of stock, Madam. Have some margarine, it's much better for-the kids.

Customer: Is it? I thought butter was better.

Salesman: No, no! Margarine is better, and it's cheaper, too. Do you want one or two packets?

Customer: One - small.

Salesman: No, no! Take a big packet. It will save you money in the long run. Here it is. What else, Madam?

Customer: A shirt for my husband.

Salesman: Here we are - a nice smart, yellow shirt!
Customer: Blue!
Salesman: What?
Customer: He wants a blue shirt, medium size.
Salesman: No medium size, Madam. Small will do.
Customer: (Very confused) How do you know my husband's size?
Salesman: Eh... Madam, would you say your husband is my size or smaller?
Customer: Larger!
Salesman: ... Larger, you say, I see.... Yes, that's O.K. You see, this type of shirt comes in larger than standard sizes:... This shirt will fit him perfectly.
Customer: Are you sure?
Salesman: Of course, Madam.... A beautiful shirt,
Customer: (Sighing) All right, all right.... I'll take it.

Was this salesmanship? He talked four times as much as the passive type. No! His sales technique is not good either. He is the "high-pressure type", almost forcing the customers to buy.

Normally he will not succeed in cheating the customers as in this case. Most customers will resist and refuse to buy what they do not need. Those who cannot say "No" will react later, which may be even worse. They will feel dissatisfied with their visit to the shop and it is not likely that they will come back.

So a high-pressure salesman is dangerous. He may lose customers. In a co-operative shop, the customers are members and they own the business. When a customer is lost, it means the loss of someone who believed in the co-operative idea. No, the high-pressure type is not the right type of salesman for a co-operative shop.

We are now coming to a basic principle of salesmanship. The modern salesman fully understands that he needs the custom of his "regulars". It is the number of regular customers that decides whether a co-operative shop will succeed or not.

The Customer-oriented Salesman

The salesman in a modern co-operative is basically a good listener rather than a fast talker. He aims at understanding the customer, creating an atmosphere of trust and trying to satisfy the customer's real needs.

He is a Customer-oriented Salesman.



What makes a customer-oriented salesman different from other types of salesmen? Let us look at his behaviour in general, starting with some very basic principles.



As a customer, what do you expect when entering a shop? Write your comments on the situations described below.

1. The staff of the shop you enter do not seem at all interested in you. When you ask for assistance they do not treat you politely.

2. You need help from a salesman but he is busy cleaning a shelf, a job he does not seem to want to interrupt.

3. You are being served by a shop assistant. A "very important person" enters the shop. The assistant leaves you standing and immediately looks after the other customer.

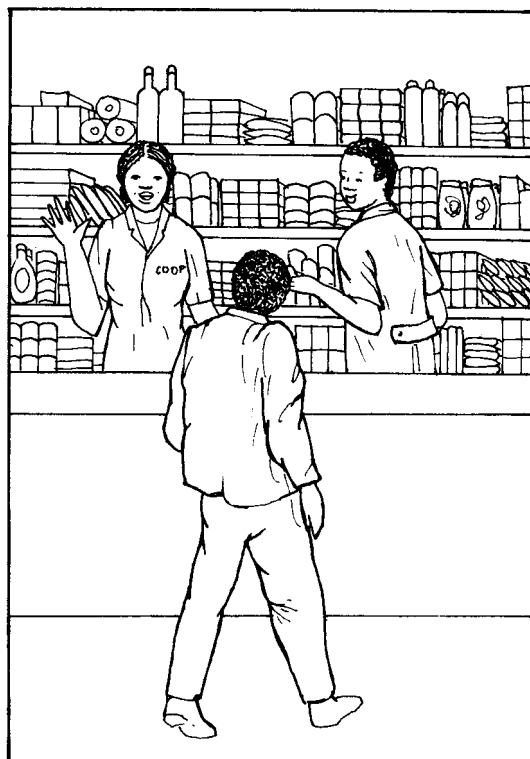
4. When the telephone rings, the salesman immediately leaves you in order to answer it. After a rather long conversation he comes back and continues serving you, without any excuse or explanation as to why the telephone call was more important than you.

5. You just want to buy a packet of salt. "We've run out," says the salesman and does not say anything else.

Well, when you have decided, as a customer, to spend some of your money in a shop, you feel that this is important. And you expect the salesman to feel that it is important for him too.

So, as a customer, you expect a certain type of treatment when you enter a shop:

- You want the staff to notice you.
- You expect them to greet you.
- If you are a regular customer, you may even expect them to recognise you.
- In short, you want to feel welcome.



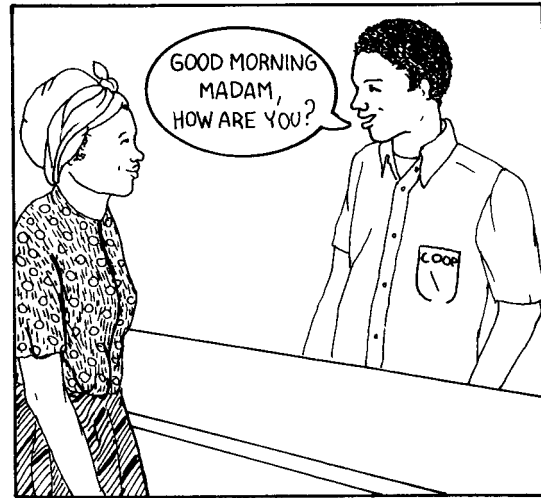
Sometimes it is a good exercise to pretend to be a customer and to remember how customers think and behave.

But let us now put you back in your normal job as a salesman to see how you should greet and treat the customers to make them feel welcome.

In a Counter-Service Shop

Your introductory remarks should make the customer feel welcome and confident.

This is good. If you can attend to the customer straightaway, it is simple. You greet her, await her answer, and contact is established.



This is even better. You should try to learn your customers' names, and use them.

Remember that smiles and friendliness are free gifts - be generous.



Why do customers like you to know their names? What does it mean to them when you use their names in the shop? Write your comments below.

If you already have a customer and a new one arrives, you should not leave the one you are serving, but you can still take notice of the newcomer.

In most cases you also have time for a "Good morning, Madam" You always have time for a nod and a smile and that is important. You have made contact and given the newcomer confidence while you are still with another customer.

Good - that is the customer-oriented salesman in action!

In a Self-Service Shop

In a self-service shop there are, generally speaking, more customers and fewer employees, but that makes the job of the salesman even more important. The customers can help themselves to most things but sometimes they still need your help. You should not only be able to help the customer, you should also be able to see whether he wants help or not.



What do the Customers expect?

The customers in a self-service shop have the same needs as the customers in a counter-service shop, that is to feel important and to feel welcome. Moreover, they expect help when they need it.

What do you do?

The beginning is more or less the same. You have to establish contact. The "Good morning" is also correct here. The smile and the nod are always correct. But what then...? How do you know whether the customer wants assistance or not? Well, if there are not too many customers, you may ask: "Can I help you, Madam?"

However, you will not always have time to ask all your customers if they need assistance or not. You have to look out for the "HELP!" signals



If a customer looks happy and is slowly walking about putting things in a basket, everything is all right.

Almost any other behaviour should warn you that help may be needed.

"HELP!" signals:

A customer looking confused,
that is a "HELP!" signal!



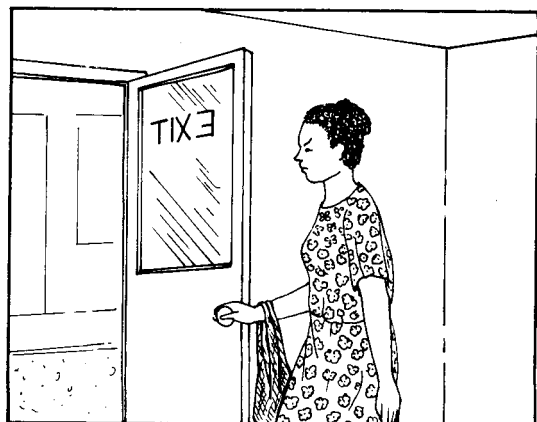
A customer looking around all
over the place,
that is a "HELP!" signal!



A customer holding different
articles with a puzzled ex-
pression,
that is a "HELP!" signal!



An annoyed customer hurrying
out of the shop. Sorry!
That means you missed the
"HELP!" signal - you have
lost a customer



The "HELP!" signals need your immediate attention Why?

Well, the customer is stuck in one way or another. The customer has a need which she cannot satisfy without your assistance. What will happen if she does not get assistance immediately? One likely reaction is that the customer will think:

"Oh, in this shop one can never get any help. I'd better do my shopping somewhere else."

If this happens you have lost a regular customer, you have reduced your sales considerably, instead of increasing them.



What is the loss of a customer "worth" in money? Note below by how much you would reduce your annual sales, if you lost a regular customer.

A customer-oriented salesman is an expert on "HELP!" signals. He would never lose a customer as in the above example.

To sum up:

As a customer-oriented salesman

- you establish a good relationship with every customer;
- you aim to create a feeling of confidence;
- you ensure that your customer feels important;
- you ensure that your customer feels welcome;
- you are generous with smiles and nods;
- you are an expert on the "HELP!" signals;
- last, but not least, since you are a Co-operative salesman you never forget that the customer/member is your employer and that he owns the Society.

THE SALES PROCESS

There are many different ways of conducting an actual sale but when a customer-oriented salesman is on the scene, the pattern will almost always be as follows:

- listen
- ask
- advise

Since your aim is to satisfy your customer's needs, you cannot sell anything until these needs have been established. The first thing that you have to do is to listen.

Since you have already established contact by greeting the customer, it is quite natural for the customer to tell you what she wants.

Suppose the customer tells you she wants to buy a shirt. She may tell you more - or she may leave it at that. If she tells you only that she wants a shirt - do not start selling one! Leave that to the "high-pressure" salesman.



Listen and ask questions

The more you know about their needs, the better your chances of making your customers satisfied.

The dialogue could be something like this:

Customer: I'd like to look at some shirts.
Salesman: Yes, Madam. What kind of shirt? Long-sleeved, short-sleeved?

Customer: Well, long-sleeved, I guess.
Salesman: And what about the size?
Customer: Well, it's for my husband, he takes medium size.
Salesman: Medium size, long sleeves. Yes, we have quite a few. Any particular colour?
Customer: Well, I don't know..... maybe red, or blue, or..
Salesman: Here we are, this one is medium size, and this one, too. What about the material. Do you prefer cotton or maybe synthetic material?
Customer: I don't know. My husband wants a cool shirt for the hot weather.



Let us stop here for a while. After this short dialogue the salesman already knows a few things about the customer's needs.

Fill in the missing words in the statements below. Cross out either the "definitely" or the "preferably" in each statement.

The size should definitely/preferably be _____

The sleeves should definitely/preferably be _____

The colour should definitely/preferably be _____

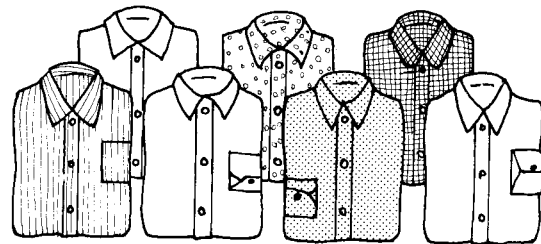
The material should definitely/preferably be _____

The salesman wants to find out whether he is able to satisfy the customer and supply a shirt that meets her needs; that is why he is asking all these questions.

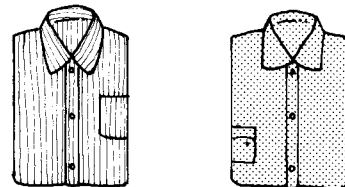
Of course, there may be hundreds of shirts that meet the customer's needs.



But there is only a limited number of shirts in stock in the shop.



And only a few of the shirts in stock are of interest at this moment: only those which will meet the customer's needs.



In this case, there are two shirts which are suitable for selling to the customer, as you can see. They will satisfy the customer's needs, and they are in stock.

A salesman who does not listen and ask questions may waste both the customer's time and his own by trying to sell one of the other shirts in stock.

By asking a few questions our salesman has already found that

- the shirt should definitely be of medium size;
- the shirt should preferably have long sleeves;
- the shirt should preferably be in a bright colour (red or blue was mentioned, but it did not seem to be that important);
- the material should definitely be cotton (the customer said she did not know, but a synthetic material would not be cool in hot weather).

It is important for the salesman to note what is definite, and what is not.

Check what you have written in the box on page 24. Does it correspond to the above statements?

Let us now continue the dialogue.

- Salesman: It should be cool in warm weather, you said. Then I suggest cotton. Here we have a nice one in cotton long sleeves medium size.
- Customer: Yes, it looks nice, maybe it's a bit dark though.
- Salesman: What about this one? Same type but yellow.
- Customer: Yes, maybe. What's the price?
- Salesman: This one costs \$35. It is very good quality indeed.
- Customer: Well, maybe it's a little dear.
- Salesman: Perhaps, Madam, but here's another one, also in yellow, which costs only \$20.
- Customer: That's better. What's the difference in quality?
- Salesman: Well, the quality is not really the same, the material is thinner. If your husband is going to use it as an everyday shirt, it will not last as long as the more expensive one.
- Customer: As a matter of fact, he's going to use it as an everyday shirt - but anyway \$35 is too much for me at the moment. Maybe I'll come back later.

Salesman: Madam, you said that your husband wanted a cool shirt for the hot weather. What about a short-sleeved shirt? We have one of the same quality as the \$35 shirt. With short sleeves it'll cost you only \$25.

Customer: Yes, why not then? I'll get good quality without paying too much. All right, I'll take that one.

Salesman: Thank you. I'm sure you've made the right choice. Here you are, Madam. I hope you'll be back soon.

Customer: Thank you very much indeed.

Well, that was the customer-oriented salesman in action. Did you notice how well he used his knowledge of the customer's needs? Instead of a red or blue, long-sleeved shirt he sold a yellow, short-sleeved shirt, and the customer was fully satisfied.



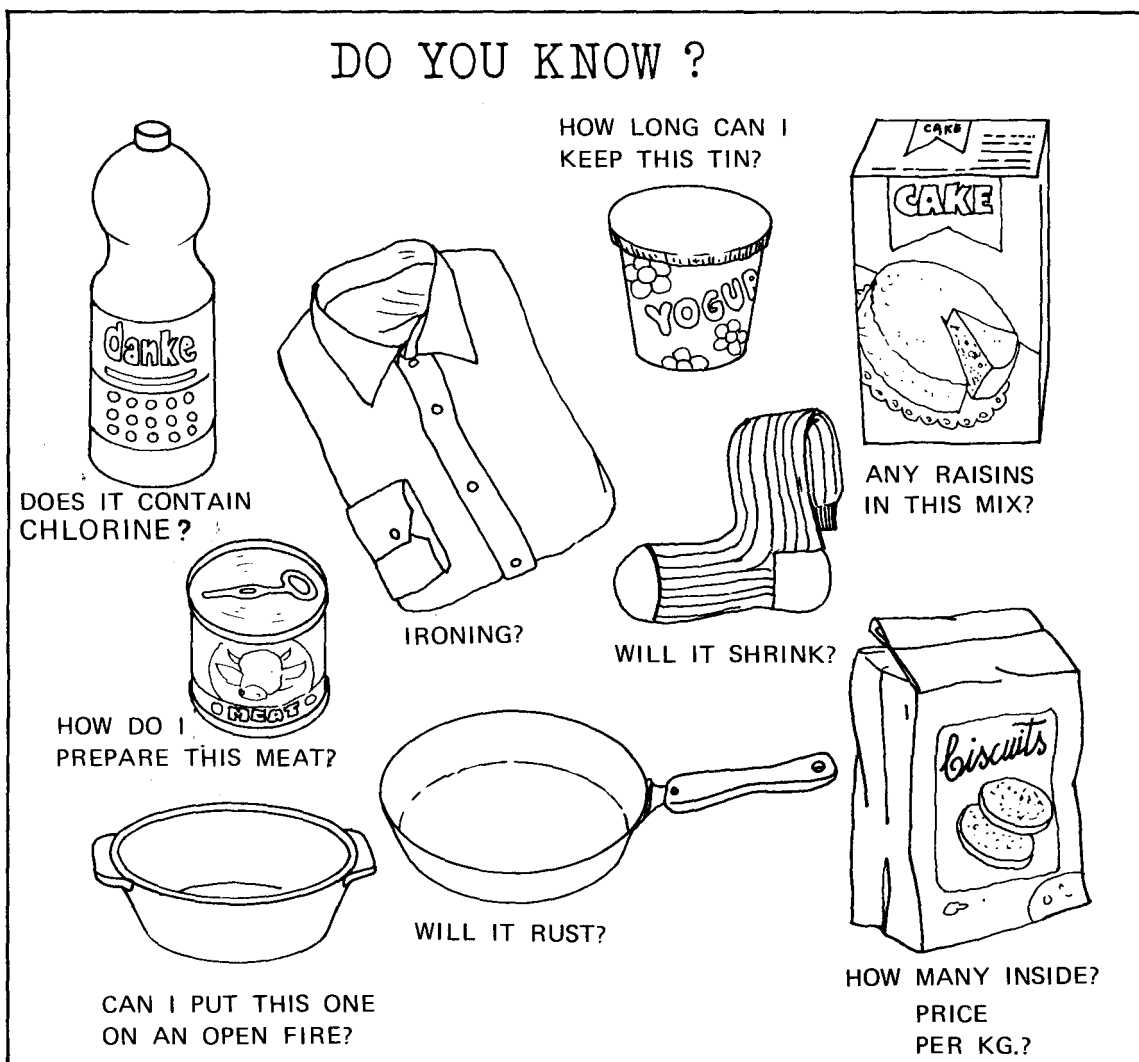
You now know that you should follow the listen - ask - advise pattern. What else do you need to know?

Well, no technique in the world will help you to sell if you do not know the goods you are selling.

YOUR STOCK RANGE

There are many ways of getting to know about all the different things you have in stock. Sooner or later you will learn by experience, but that takes too long. A customer-oriented salesman has to learn quickly. You can do it if you want to. Here are a few tips:

- Ask more experienced colleagues or the manager for information.
- Read about the goods. Often the information is printed on the packets.
- Be a regular customer of your own co-operative. You can learn a lot if you use the various products yourself.
- Ask the manager to organise a course or a study circle on "product knowledge".



Sales Talk

Even if you know about the goods you sell, you can make mistakes during the sales process. Listen to this ambitious salesman trying to sell a transistor radio:

Customer: Yes, that radio looks nice. You said \$200, didn't you?

Salesman: That's right. It is a nice one, it's got six transistors.

Customer: Six... I see... hm...

Salesman: It has both short and medium wave bands.

Customer: Aha... (looking confused)

Salesman: And a telescopic aerial.

Customer: Telescopic, you said..... (now more confused)

Salesman: And an earphone, too.

Customer: A phone???

Salesman: Yes, for the ear. And the manufacturer's guarantee.

Customer: Eh, \$200 - well, that's a lot of money. I think I'll come back later.

Salesman: Yes, you're very welcome.

Customer: (Leaving - murmuring to himself) Telescopic phone, manufacturer's earplug, why don't they have ordinary radios?



The salesman knew all about transistor radios, so what was wrong?

All that the salesman said was true. He mentioned a lot of the radio's characteristics. These characteristics tell us what the manufacturer has put into the product, how it is made, etc., for instance: this radio has a telescopic aerial....

But this was more than the customer could understand. To him, another question was much more important: What are the advantages to me, what benefits will this product bring me? An example: I need not add an aerial to this radio....

So the salesman should not confuse the customer with more technical details than he can understand. He should explain, briefly and simply, the benefits to the customer, before he mentions the characteristics, the technical specifications.



Let us give our salesman another chance. He now knows that the benefits to the customer are the most important thing, and that he should mention them first. Then he can mention the characteristics to prove his claim. If he uses the little word 'because' it will not be difficult:

Salesman: \$200, that's right. It is a nice radio. A set of batteries will last a long time because it's got six transistors which use very little power.

Customer: Oh, that's good - it'll save me money in the long run.

Salesman: Yes, that's right. You can get all the local programmes very clearly, and you can listen to foreign stations as well, because it has both short and medium wave bands.

Customer: Can I really, with that small radio?

Salesman: Oh yes, and you don't need to put up an aerial because this radio has a built-in telescopic aerial.

Customer: Well, that's very good.

Salesman: You can also listen without being disturbed, or without disturbing others, because it has a special earphone. Just plug in this little earphone here. Then the loudspeaker goes off and only you will hear through the earphone. Try it.

Customer: (Now enthusiastic) Very good indeed! I can listen to the radio at night when the kids are asleep.

Salesman: Should you have any problems with this radio, just bring it back to us, because the manufacturer gives a six-month guarantee and will repair it free of charge.

Customer: That is very good to hear! And only \$200. I'll take it!

That was different, was it not? And yet the technical details (the characteristics) were the same, only this time they were used differently.

The salesman did not start by telling the customer that the radio had six transistors, instead he found the advantages or benefits this would bring to the customer: "a set of batteries will last a long time...." This was the first thing he said. Then he explained and proved his claim by mentioning the characteristic feature of the radio: "because it has six transistors...."

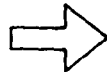
You should always move from the BENEFITS to the CHARACTERISTICS.

Look at the following examples:

BENEFITS

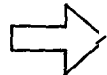
CHARACTERISTICS

This shirt is comfortable to wear, it feels cool in warm weather and warm in cool weather...



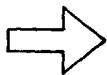
because it is made of cotton.

You can keep this milk for up to six months without a refrigerator



because it is long-life milk.

These trousers will look nice even without ironing



because they are the so-called "wash-and-wear" type.

These sandals will last longer...



because the soles are reinforced.

Once again, everything you sell has its own characteristics, which you must learn. These are what the manufacturer has put into the product right from the beginning.

But you must first find out how these characteristics benefit the customers. And, of course, these benefits are not a reality until the product is sold to the customer and he begins to use it.

It is important that you understand the following principles:

Know the characteristics of each article in the shop!

Tell the customers the benefits of the articles!

You have to practise.

Below, you will find a number of statements which describe some products. Try to find the benefits of those characteristics. Write them on the left, as in the first example.

BENEFITS

You won't burn your fingers,

CHARACTERISTICS

because this cooking pot has a plastic handle

because these tablets contain both vitamins A and C.

because these shoes have real leather soles, not plastic.

because the bottle has a fool proof screw-on top.

because the case is made of stainless steel.

because these are safety matches.

because they are home-made.

because it is made of galvanised iron.

because this bread contains no sugar.

because this paint is in a spray bottle.

To Sell More

Our examples have shown that a good co-operative salesman can sell more than an ordinary salesman. But what will happen to our members/customers then? Will they spend more money than necessary? This is definitely not the aim of the Co-operative.

Let us look at two examples:

The Ordinary Salesman

Customer: Yes, I'll take that torch, please.
Salesman: Very good. I think it's a wise choice. It's a well-known make. That will be \$4 then.
Customer: Thank you.

The Sales-minded Salesman

Customer: Yes, I'll take that torch, please.
Salesman: Very good. I think you've made a wise choice. It's a well-known make. What about batteries?
Customer: Oh yes, of course! I forgot about them.
Salesman: You need two, they are \$1 each. By the way, here we have a special bargain. It's a four-pack for only \$3. You'll save \$1, and have two extra batteries at home when you need them.
Customer: Very good. I'll take a four-pack.
Salesman: Thank you. What about bulbs? Do you want any spares straightaway? They are \$1 for a packet of two.
Customer: All right, I'll take one packet.
Salesman: Very good. That'll be \$8 in all. Thank you.

Now let us analyse these examples. The customer's need was not just "a torch". The need was for a handy source of light. Without batteries and bulbs he would not have got what he needed. The customer would have to spend money on them sooner or later.

The good salesman realised this, and the result was:

- he was giving good service to the member by supplying everything he needed at once;
- he increased the sales of the co-operative shop;
- he did not increase the member's spending.

There are many ways in which you can increase your sales without selling more than the customers need. Suppose that the customers normally buy only half of what they need from the co-operative shop, and the rest from other suppliers. Then you can double the sales of your shop without increasing the amount the customers buy. What a challenge!

Sell Complementary Goods

"Selling more" is often a matter of thinking ahead and reminding the customers of other things that they may need as a complement to what they are buying, as in our example. With a torch you need batteries and bulbs. Batteries and bulbs are said to be complementary to torches.

If you are selling a packet of writing-paper and envelopes, of course, you should remind the customer that he needs a good pen.

When a customer is buying dress material, you should ask whether she needs buttons or a needle and thread.



Suggest complementary goods for the following:

House paint: _____

Hinges: _____

Nails: _____

Tea: _____

Flour: _____

Sell Alternative Articles

In the sales example illustrated on pages 23 to 27 the customer asked for a blue or red, long-sleeved shirt. The shop did not stock such a shirt, so the salesman sold a yellow, short-sleeved shirt instead, and still satisfied his customer's needs.

That was an alternative sale. You know by now that the customer goes into the shop to satisfy a need. Usually, there is more than one article that can satisfy that need, sometimes there is a whole group to choose from. Let us take a few examples:

- A customer asking for tinned pineapples most likely needs a fruity dessert. She might buy a different tin of fruit or she might buy fresh fruit. Who knows, she might even buy chocolate pudding or sweet biscuits. That is if someone suggests it. That someone should be you - if you understand the need behind the request for tinned pineapples.

- In our first example on page 3 the customer asked for Crown biscuits. The actual need behind that request was something for the afternoon tea. You could have sold a cake, many other types of biscuits, some fresh pastries or maybe an apple pie.

To succeed in selling alternatives two things are necessary:

- 1 You need to know what goods you stock. There are alternatives for almost all your goods - you should know which ones.
- 2 You have to understand the customer's needs. A customer-oriented salesman certainly will.



Suggest alternatives for the following items from the stock range in your shop.

Orange marmalade (the actual need may be some sort of fruit preserve)

Fish (the actual need may be "a dinner")

Lettuce (the need may simply be "vegetables" - you have the whole range of vegetables to choose from)

Chicken stock cubes

Salt - Oh no! Do not overdo things!* If you are out of stock here you had better do something about your ordering system!

* There is no alternative to salt.

Remember:

Accept a "No" from the customer. If the customer really needs pineapples, do not go on trying to sell chocolate pudding!

If you overdo the "alternative selling" you may become a "high-pressure" salesman. Your job is just to suggest one or two alternatives in a polite way, and not to force the customer into buying.

Sell New Articles

The main reason for introducing a new item into your stock range should be that it has special advantages when compared to existing articles.

Because it is new the customers do not expect to find it in the shop. Consequently, they will not ask for it.

It is perfectly all right for you to inform the customers about your new articles, but accept the fact that not all of them will be interested, for the simple reason that they do not need the article.

Sell Reduced Articles

We have often repeated that a customer buys things in order to satisfy a need. Is it then correct to say that if a customer does not need an article at a certain price, he will not need it at a reduced price either? No, it is not correct!

We have also said that most people need much more than they can afford. They have to give priority to certain needs. A bargain may give customers the opportunity to satisfy a need for something which they could not otherwise afford. Therefore it is correct - and good salesmanship - to call attention to things which are sold at reduced prices.

Again, do not overdo it and suggest too many bargains!

- You may offend the customer. He may feel that you consider him a "low-income" customer. An offended customer will not return.
- You may also make customers buy more than they need. The customers will realise and regret this - later. This is dangerous, as we have already said.
- You may also weaken the economy of the shop if you always suggest bargains instead of full-priced articles. This is another problem though, discussed in other MATCOM Elements.

Sell Large Quantities

Obviously one good way to increase sales is to sell a larger quantity than the customers initially ask for. In most cases this benefits the customer.

Many articles cost less per kilo, litre, etc., when bought in larger quantities. If the customers can store larger quantities safely, and can afford them, they will save both time and money.

Silent Salesmanship

You will agree that sales depend very much on the personal skill and good behaviour you show in your direct contact with the customers.

By the way, we must mention that there are other ways of promoting and increasing the sales and improving the services. For instance, the way you display the goods is very important. In fact, if you use the right technique for the display of goods you will find that the display itself will help you to sell. That is why good display techniques are sometimes called "silent salesmanship".

The display of goods is dealt with in other MATCOM Elements.



Your Personal Appearance

You can be sure that customers notice the standard of hygiene, both of the shop itself and of its staff. They will also notice the way you dress and your personal appearance in general.

Apart from the fact that cleanliness is a **MUST** in a shop, because of the health hazards when dealing with foodstuffs, it would be a pity to have your skills in salesmanship come to nothing just because of poor personal appearance.



Think about the following statements. Do you agree with them? Comment briefly on each one.

1. Your appearance depends on your personality. You are free to dress as you like, at work as well as at home.

2. All the members will respect your style of dress; it will not affect your sales.

3. All shop staff should have a "uniform".

4. The only thing the manager and the members can demand is that you are clean and have a clean and smart appearance.

5. Write down Five Rules regarding personal appearance in the shop.

"CHECK-OUT"

To prove to yourself that you have fully understood this Element, you should now go through the following questions. Mark what you think is the right answer to each question. The first question is answered as an example. If you have problems with a particular question, go back and read the corresponding chapter again. Your teacher will later check your answers.



- 1 Which type of salesman is needed in a co-operative shop?
- a The high-pressure type.
 - b The passive type.
 - Ⓒ The customer-oriented salesman.

Which is the most serious risk when a customer is badly treated?

- a He will leave without paying.
 - b He will leave without buying.
 - c He will never return to the shop.
- 3 The aim of your first words to a customer entering the shop, is to:
- a find out what the customer wants;
 - b find out the customer's mood;
 - c create contact and a feeling of confidence.
- 4 Why is it important to listen to the customer before you start selling?
- a Because you should always leave the initiative to the customer.
 - b Because you cannot sell anything without first finding out the customer's needs.
 - c All customers need to talk.
- 5 Should a co-operative salesman try to increase the sales of his shop?
- a No, trying to sell more than the customer asks for is always bad.
 - b Yes, he should try to increase his share of the market.
 - c Yes, if he sells to non-members only, so that the members save their money.

- 6 Which of the following statements tells us the "characteristics" of the product?
- a These biscuits are good for children.
 - b These biscuits contain no sugar.
 - c These biscuits are very popular.
- 7 Which of the following statements describes the "benefits" of the product?
- a This bucket is made of plastic.
 - b This bucket has a steel handle.
 - c This bucket is light to carry.
- 8 Stating what the benefits of an article are, means:
- a telling the customer everything about it;
 - b not telling him the disadvantages;
 - c explaining its advantages from the customer's point of view.
- 9 What do we mean by "HELP!" signals?
- a That you need assistance from a colleague.
 - b That the fire-alarm is ringing in the shop.
 - c That a customer's behaviour indicates that he needs advice.
- 10 Which of the following is an example of a "complementary sale"?
- a Selling a whole packet of rice to someone who asks for only a small packet.
 - b Selling toothpaste to someone who has asked for a toothbrush.
 - c Giving an extra egg - free of charge - when you sell a dozen eggs.
- 11 Which of the following is an example of an "alternative sale"?
- a That another salesman in the shop will attend to the customer.
 - b Selling tomorrow what you cannot sell today.
 - c Selling tomatoes to a customer who asks for cucumbers.
- 12 If a customer is anxious to pay the lowest possible price for a commodity, you should recommend:
- a that he buy larger quantities at a time (10 kg for \$6.00);
 - b that he buy smaller quantities at a time (2 kg for \$1.30);
 - c that he wait to see if the price goes down.

COMPLEMENTARY EXERCISES

To complete your studies of this topic you should take part in some of the following exercises, which will be organised by your teacher.



Group Discussions :

1 "Characteristics and Benefits"

Select a number of articles from your stock. List the "characteristics" of the articles. Then, try to transform them into "benefits" for the customers.

2 The customer-oriented Salesman

Discuss and compare what each of you wrote in the box on page 16. Try to explain why the shop staff behaved in this way.

3 Your Personal Appearance

Compare your comments on the statements on page 40. Discuss and prepare a group report on this subject.

Role Playing on Sales Technique

Salesmanship can best be practised through "role-playing exercises". You should take part in several such exercises under the guidance of your instructor. The training should preferably take place in a shop, using the actual assortment of goods.

The person playing the part of the customer should be clear about his general needs, his funds and other conditions relevant to the situation. The person playing the role of the salesman should, of course, know his stock range and the characteristics of the articles.

Afterwards, each "play" is discussed and analysed with regard to the salesman's approach in general, his way of treating the customer, his use of the listen-ask-advise technique and his ability to describe the benefits and characteristics of the products.