

View in Interior of Universal Electrical Co.'s Store, Columbus, O., Showing the Modern Method of Displaying Only One or Two Appliances in the Demonstrating Room.

# Marketing Washers and Vacuum Cleaners in the Home

Problem of Merchandising Electrical Household Labor-Saving Appliances Easier Today Because of Judicious Advertising, but Skillful Salesmanship Is Still Necessary to Success

By E. L. BENNETT

*Sales Manager, The Air-Way Co.*

At a recent electrical convention an officer of a large corporation made the statement that he wanted to impress upon the minds of all those engaged in the sale of appliances that the greatest possibilities for the next few years are in the sale of electric cleaners and washing machines. He substantiated his statement by saying that housewives are becoming thoroughly educated to the utility of these devices, which provide the most efficient methods of accomplishing the work formerly done in a crude and laborious way.

A number of years ago I encountered an old-time house-to-house salesman trying to interest women in the purchase of an electric vacuum

cleaner. In those days selling a vacuum cleaner or a washing machine to the housewife was perhaps comparable today with trying to interest a business man in the purchase of a commercial aeroplane for his everyday use. He, the business man, could comprehend that no doubt the near future would provide a much faster mode of travel—the aeroplane—but to him it was only a vague idea. Yet he believed it was the coming thing.

So did the housewife believe that to save labor in her home some day she had to have an electric vacuum cleaner, an electric washing machine, an ironing machine, etc. Seemingly the price was prohibitive. In fact, like most



all purchases of that kind, she figured first cost, not having been educated to the theory that such an appliance to cost, say \$75 or \$100, should be spread over a term of years.

#### MODERN HOUSEWIFE READY FOR DEVELOPMENTS IN APPLIANCES.

Today, thanks to many excellent machines, intelligent engineers and unselfish capital, we meet a different condition. The housekeeper does not need to dress like a nurse tending a contagious disease case in order to do the cleaning with old-fashioned broom and dust-pan or brush and beat and pound a rug in the back yard. Instead, we have many creditable electric suction cleaners for such purposes. In the past three years the home manager has had the privilege to reviewing a number of striking developments toward the solution of the house-cleaning problem.

Today the good housewife does not think with dread of cleaning. Instead, her cleaner is easily connected to the electricity supply and is accessible. In a moment she simply runs her machine over the rugs, carpets and upholstered furniture, thereby saving not only time but wear and tear on material as well as wear and tear on the body and mind.

The dealers of today who sell labor-saving appliances fortunately have connected with the way of twentieth century merchandising plans, some of which are being developed by the manufacturers. However, many of our most ingenious sales plans have been defined by the men on the firing line—the salesman or house-to-house canvasser. Thanks to publicity, we may take almost any magazine and find striking advertisements forcibly telling the housewife of the many ways to save labor in her home.

#### COMBINING VACUUM CLEANER SALES WITH PHONOGRAPHS.

It was my privilege not long ago to call on a distributor in the Middle West and witness a most interesting demonstration and sale of a vacuum cleaner in connection with the sale of a phonograph.

The salesman argued that the phonograph was as necessary in the home as the cleaner; it performed a function necessary to the enjoyment of the family. Yet he most forcibly pic-

tured to the housewife the labor and money she would save by having her home thoroughly sanitary and satisfactorily cleaned by the cleaner. The saving, as compared to sending her rugs out and having them cleaned by a process, would not only pay for the vacuum cleaner in time but would afford additional money to pay for the phonograph. As the result of the salesman's forcible arguments the lady of the house purchased not only the phonograph but the cleaner.

In drawing this bit of psychology in salesmanship to the attention of ELECTRICAL REVIEW readers it will afford some thought on the part of men who have purchased some new piece of furniture or some other appliance for their home. Women today are managing their homes as husbands manage their business—along scientific, mechanical lines—and we are not sure but that the housewife is doing a better job managing her home than some business men in their attempts at managing a business.

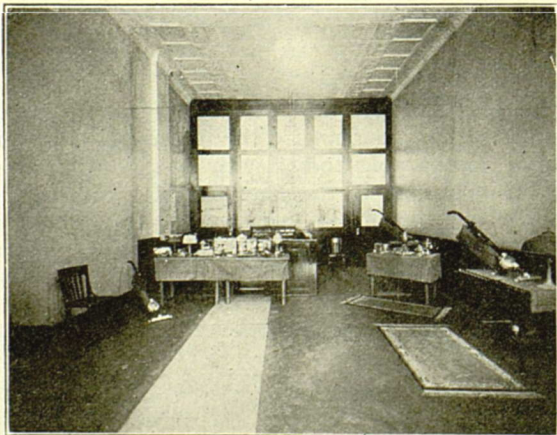
#### DEALER DEMONSTRATES ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES TO SEWING CIRCLE.

We have in mind now a plan which was put in effect by a dealer to have his electric shop associated in the minds of his community as a house of service. Nothing was seemingly too laborious for him or his organization to do with regard to information and service to anyone. This dealer could well be nicknamed a "Go-Getter." He launched the idea by putting in six electric sewing machines, nicely arranged on sewing tables, and then sent special invitations to the ladies' aid society of one of his local churches, stating that they were at liberty to visit his store on a certain date and to bring their sewing, which all churches do more or less for missions. He further stated that at noon-time he was going to extend to them a buffet lunch. He took particular pains to arrange his store attractively with the articles displayed in such a manner that each of the ladies present might actually make their own demonstrations to ascertain the operation of the various articles.

For instance, in the center of the room was a rug, 10 by 12 ft., and at either end were two types of vacuum cleaners. The coffee that was served at luncheon was made in an electric percolator, the ices served were made in an electric refrigerator outfit, and a very tempting dish was prepared in an electric chafing dish. A report from this dealer states that the advertising derived and the actual sales were gratifying. Each of the ladies will always remember Mr. Dealer as an unselfish one.

In selling, human nature treats with human nature, and we are confronted with an element of two classes: those that are to be pleased and those already pleased. Both are necessary, and the dealer who is unable to ascertain the true meaning of satisfaction is to be pitied.

It isn't necessary at this time in the twentieth century to use the old method of canvassing, which was, after approaching the housewife on the front porch, to hold her attention, even if it were necessary to push the foot in the front door so it could not be closed. Instead, thanks to suggestions, the dealer today operates his campaigns



Small Appliances and Cleaners Displayed Near Desk Where Lighting Bills Are Paid.



for reaching the housewife in such an intelligent and enlightening manner that she cannot help but be greatly interested.

There are many elements needed by a successful canvasser and the first requisites are cleanliness, appearance and ability to state quite forcibly a straightforward story; to be absolutely sold himself on his proposition and to know the personnel of his company in every instance. He should know just how far he may go with regard to promising service and to never promise anything to the housewife that he cannot give. There are some dealers today who, in order to make sales, will promise anything and give nothing.

#### CARE OF WINDOW DISPLAYS AND NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING.

Much thought should be given by the electrical contractor-dealer in these days to his window dressing. We are all prone to "Stop, Look and Listen," especially in the windows of any store that is attractively arranged, no matter what they contain. A first-class window is the best advertisement and seller that can be had and it is necessary that it be kept clean and the windows washed regularly. The psychological effect of a clean window upon a passer-by may be compared to that produced by a man with a clean collar and a smooth-shaven face—it creates sales impressions and confidence. Many, many times are unfavorable remarks made about store windows that are dirty.

If the electrical dealer would engage a professional window trimmer in his city he could lay before him tentative plans for window trimming during a given period of time, say, for instance, 12 months. Very often this window trimmer would be able to suggest attractive background designs that are inexpensive. By having at least four different backgrounds they could be used alternately during the year. They would give variety to the window displays, and at no great amount of expense.

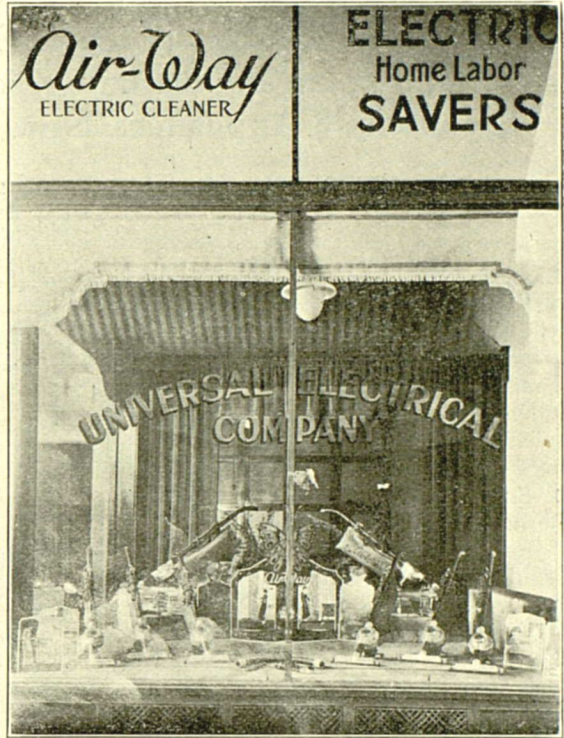
It is further highly desirable for the dealer to work out a schedule of newspaper advertising and window trims to appear co-ordinately. By this plan many dealers are successful in marketing products that the average customer does not know are for sale.

#### ADVICE AND TRAINING NECESSARY FOR APPLIANCE SALESMEN.

Many salesmen think only in terms of how much commission they are going to receive, and they will not put their thoughts toward constructive selling. In other words, a quick analysis of prospective purchasers and the determination to sell are necessary. Salesmen of these times are born and not satisfactorily taught. It is practically impossible to take any man of the average type, unless he is interested more or less in selling, and materialize him into what is termed a "salesman." As a matter of fact, the definition of a real salesman is simple, but, to have the true meaning, the word "man" should come before sales, because, after all, it takes a man in more ways than one to be a true salesman. If he be a man first, he can acquire sales ability afterward. A good many of us, we assume,

could hitch the word "sales" to our man and have a true condition because we are quite likely to sail over matters that are seemingly trivial.

Many manufacturers maintain "Dealer's Promotion Departments," the aim of which is to



Window Display of Universal Electrical Co., Columbus, O.

thoroughly train each salesman, not only on the product but on household labor-saving devices in general. This is not only commendable but constructive to those presenting sales to the housewife. By this means the ultimate user is going to get first-hand information without any frills or flourishes in the way of flowery conversations regarding electric labor-saving appliances for the home. The housewife always wants facts about the new "machinery" she is going to work with, and the modern salesmen are able to dispense these facts in the most convincing manner.