

HOW TO MAKE MORE MONEY

Part Four

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CHAPTER XXIII

Selling Food-Stuffs by Mail – An Unprofitable Proposition in Some Cases, and a Highly Lucrative One in Others – Depends Largely Upon the Kind of Products Handled – Staples That Can be Successfully Handled – How and Why.

The selling of foodstuffs by mail may be either a very risky proposition or a very profitable one, depending upon many different considerations. Generally speaking, there could be nothing better for one to deal in, as certainly there is a great demand for food products than for wearing apparel, furniture, hardware, or anything in everyday use, saying nothing about the many things that are regarded as luxuries. But most foods can be purchased locally at less cost than the mail order dealer can supply them for, and as the staple products, at least, are usually sold at standard prices, the consumer would recognize at once whether the goods advertised by the mail order dealer are bargains or not.

Of course, in the case of the large general mail order houses where such staples are purchased in carload lots it is easier for them to cut the retail prices; even then it is understood that there is not a great profit in staples, but where such concerns do such a tremendous business they make up in quantity of orders for the small percentage of profit, and, besides, as they aim to fill practically all of their customers' wants in every line, just the convenience afforded the customer by buying goods on which there is a small profit often enables the house to secure orders for specialties on which there is a larger percentage of profit. So, in any event, or in the cases of most staple products, at least, the price is the chief consideration. This subject of handling staple articles I took up at length in Chapter XX.

Another disadvantage in the handling of most food products is the fact that they are perishable or subject to deterioration, so that by the time they reach the customer at a distance they will not be as fresh as when they are shipped out; and in the case of liquids, as milk, kerosene, molasses, etc., there is the question of leakage and evaporation to consider.

There are exceptions, however, to both of the objections above referred to – the small margin of profit and the perishability of the goods. The latter objection, in fact, forms in the case of some products an advantage rather than a disadvantage. In the matter of fish, for instance, it is very difficult to get the fresh product in many of the interior sections at least. There are fish dealers on the Atlantic coast who were led to recognize this fact and to take advantage of it, and a number of them have built up large patronages in shipping fresh fish packed in ice and straw, and there are many steady customers in the western states who regularly secure supplies of fresh fish from dealers way off in New England. It would seem that there is room for a number of others in this line, as the field does not appear to be crowded and, besides, those who take up such an enterprise can go after business along more profitable lines than those who are already engaged in it, from what I've seen of the latter's methods. I will not attempt to suggest selling methods in this article on account of the limited space I will be able to give this subject. It will be readily

TABLOID ADVICE – No. 35 – when a man tells you that he can make money or save money for you it is the part of wisdom to at least look him over. Get his proposition and find out what he has done for others. If he has no successes to his record you are justified in being suspicious of him. The services of a theorist, while cheap, may prove to be really expensive. Get

a many who can “deliver the goods” and his charges usually will be more inexpensive in the end than the other fellow’s.

apparent, however, that the greater patronage for a business of this nature would come from the well-to-do, and therefore it would be advisable to use the high class magazines and those devoted to cooking and the household, rather than the regular mail order papers.

Another perishable product which may be successfully handled in a mail order way is “hen fruit.” During the winter it is almost impossible to obtain good fresh eggs in the large cities, at least, and as there are many who are willing to pay very fancy prices for fresh eggs quite a lucrative business might be done along this line during the cold months by owners of large henneries. One concern that I know of uses some new kind of crate specially made to hold the eggs tightly in their individual compartments, thus eliminating or minimizing the danger of breakage. This concern advertises in the high class magazines. I should say that in addition to the magazines, dailies in large cities near the dealer’s home could be advantageously used – both on account of the nearness, which would mean more prompt delivery, and on account of this minimizing still further the chances of breakage. As there are not many who could engage in this business on account of not having a sufficient number of producing fowl during the cold months, those who would take it up would have another advantage in not having much competition. This is an instance of where a staple article may be handled at a fancy price.

Of course, one of the greatest considerations in handling such products is the fact that as they are foods that are used right along, and quickly consumed, when the dealer gets a customer started the latter is likely to continue ordering as he needs new supplies. It is an excellent “repeat” proposition. On this account, too, the cost of getting business, through advertising or otherwise, is usually a small matter as compared with the advertising of articles which are not in such general and steady use.

I will have more to say on this subject in my next chapter, mentioning other food products which can be successfully handled in a mail order way, and more particularly those that would be regarded as specialties rather than staples.

CHAPTER XXIV

Food Specialties Profitably Sold by Mail – Avoiding the Staples with Fixed Prices, and Perishable Goods – Appealing to Special Classes – Foods Bought as Medicines – Those that “Food Cranks” go Out of Their Way to Secure, Regardless of Price, etc.

The specialties among food products that may be successfully handled in a mail order way are “too numerous to mention.” There is a concern in Battle Creek, Mich., for instance, that manufactures a lot more than “57 varieties” which has been doing a very successful business for many years, and an increasing business year after year – selling all kinds of cereal foods and nut preparations, particularly. Dealing with “food cranks,” so-called, this company has found it more profitable to reach these people through “crank” publications and deal with them direct than to have its products handled through “the trade,” as the latter, in most cities at least, could not afford to carry a full line of goods to meet the demands of the few who would call for them.

Mentioning Battle Creek suggests “Postum Cereal,” an imitation of coffee which, it is said, contains no caffeine, which element is said to be a poison, etc. Of course, this cereal coffee is not generally handled through dealers, which only goes to show that even a product appealing at first to a limited class can be profitably handled through dealers if sufficient advertising of an educative nature is put out – and it cost a small fortune to advertise the Postum product before Mr. Post became the multi-millionaire he not is. But if this advertising of a new product had *failed*, where would Mr. Post be now? The point we are trying to make is that the advertising of this – or any new food product – could have been “tried out” at much smaller expense in a mail order way. *Why can it not be so tried out now* by someone else who will put out such a product and who has small capital at his disposal? Cereal Coffee certainly does not quickly deteriorate, else it could not be sent out by the Post concern to the section of the country remotest from the source of production. Then to send out by mail in sample packages enough for a trial, should be a simple matter and a comparatively inexpensive one. Just to send out in an envelope “enough for 4 cups” or more, free, or for a few cents, would cost little, counting both postage and the cost of the article itself. It seems that there ought to be a pretty good opening for the handling of a good cereal coffee by mail, and with small expenditure to start with – though of course the business may afterwards develop into a dealers’ proposition.

There are plenty of other good specialties or fancy goods that can be advantageously handled “direct to the consumer.” And, of course, as stated in previous chapters, these do not include the usual staples, or goods that have fixed prices.

There is at least one concern I know of that is doing a big business in selling olive oil by mail – located at Los Angeles, Cal. But this particular concern has created a demand for its product by *advertising it specially for special purposes* – so it would not necessarily compete with the brands that are obtainable locally in any store. It has shown that its product is a fine medicinal preparation, that it makes fat, makes the hair grow, and a lot of other things.

TABLOID ADVICE – No. 36 – Whether you’re spending \$10,000 a year in advertising or \$100, if you can get the same or better results by using one-half the space you’ve been using, of course you save \$5,000 or \$50. If an expert in mail order advertising can show you how to accomplish such a result, the small fee paid for his services is really a profitable investment.

TABLOID ADVICE – No. 37 – If your advertising does not lie, the inquiries it brings are of real value. It is foolish, then, not to properly handle these inquiries – not to have the right kind of literature to send out, and convincing follow-up letters, based upon a winning scheme.

Special brands of grape juice, too, have been successfully handled in a mail order way where their virtues have been shown to be of interest to particular classes of people, who take them for their medicinal value, etc.

Flour – plain white flour – would hardly be considered a *special* food product, or one that could be profitably sold by a mail order concern in competition with local dealers. But there may be special kinds of flour which invalids or others would go out of their way to get, upon which a mail order dealer might build up a successful business. People who have diabetes, for instance, and who are told by their physicians that they must use flour containing no starch, would expect to pay a good price for Diabetic Flour, including the express charges. When one buys food products as medicine he is willing to pay the price of a medicine, which is usually more than the price of a food.

There is a man in Chicago who gets 20 cents for a loaf of bread, and who sells his product mostly through mail orders. The bread is made of whole wheat flour and is “raised” without yeast or baking powder, and this is something that many hygienists would send for to any distance, and pay almost any price for. This particular bread, on account of having no leavening or ferment in it, is supposed to keep fresh for many days and can therefore be handled in a mail order way, where the usual 5-cent-a-loaf bread could not.

These few suggestions regarding food products as they apply to the mail order business – and those given in previous chapter – will doubtless aid in showing what are the requirements in this line.

The End.