Industry Calls Home Economists to Service

Jane Tiffany Wagner
Iowa State College

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Home Economists to Service

"The home service worker is both an educator and an interpreter," says Jane Tiffany Wagner.

THE PROFESSION of home service today has resulted from industry's growing recognition of the need for a better understanding between business and the consumer. The home service worker is both an educator and an interpreter, who knows on the one hand what the customer thinks and wants, and on the other what the company is doing to satisfy the customer's needs. Supply and demand are not economic terms to her, but practical factors which she helps to balance.

My own home service experience with The Consolidated Gas Company of New York, and with Servel, Inc., makers of the Servel Electrolux gas refrigerator, has been primarily concerned with the public utility field, and with distributor and dealer home service work. Magazines, department stores, advertising and publicity agencies and radio stations, among others, frequently have departments where similar work is done, under other names. In general, a discussion of the work done in utility and manufacturing departments will indicate the possibilities of home service.

The home service staff in a utility company acts as an intermediary between the women who are users of appliances and consumers of gas and electricity, and the company itself. This department works closely with advertising, sales, and sales promotion. Each worker's job is one of subtle selling, even though she may never actually handle a sales receipt. She interests women in the use of modern appliances, and after their purchase, sees that the proper use and care of these appliances are understood.

There are many ways of doing this. In most utility companies, public demonstrations of the equipment in actual use is the means of presenting it to prospective owners. Demonstrations may take place at special sales floor kitchens to attract casual visitors who are paying bills or shopping, or they may be given in the home service auditorium, designed to seat large groups, where clubs may make special appointments.

Sometimes demonstrations are given in halls outside the company, halls where organizations hold their own meetings. Recently many community newspapers have sponsored local cooking schools, usually in the neighborhood theater, where the utility home service department demonstrates other products in addition to the company's appliances.

To instruct the purchaser of new equipment in the correct, easy way to use and care for the new possession, home service work takes the form of home calls, supplemented by telephone and mail service. In large companies, the home call job is usually the first one open to the beginner, who is given a special training course in the equipment sold and in the services and policies of the company.

Telephone service, through which customers may get immediate answers to questions on cookery, equipment and general household lore, is another way used by the home service worker for giving individual help. Personal letters of inquiry are answered, and printed or mimeographed recipes distributed through a mailing service maintained in many departments. Recipes are also given away at demonstrations and sales floor activities.

Depending on locality the home service worker deals with urban or rural groups and organizations, including women's clubs, church committees, P.T.A.'s, social and charitable groups, extension and adult education clubs, etc. Often she works in the schools, with the home economics classes, with boy and girl scout and campfire troops, the 4-H and other youth organizations. At fairs, exhibits, model home, furniture and appliance shows, conventions and conferences, she may be called upon to run display booths and present the company's products to the public.

Kitchen planning is a specialized phase of home service offered in some metropolitan companies. It involves work with home owners who wish to engineer scientific new kitchens, or to revamp old ones. Color scheming plays a large part in this work, which naturally involves a thorough knowledge of all kitchen equipment.

The home economics student interested in writing will find an outlet for her abilities in the preparation of cookery columns for local papers and company (Continued on page 12).
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Home Service
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house organs, as well as in writing printed bulletins on cookery and equipment to accompany bills mailed monthly. Such literature is prepared to keep the general public and the company personnel in touch with what the home service department does to promote good will inside and outside the organization.

What training in college will best supplement the bachelor of science degree in home economics which is essential for home service jobs? Courses in psychology and sociology should be stressed to develop an understanding of human nature. Public speaking may develop natural aptitudes or overcome lack of confidence in the ability to perform before an audience.

Design courses will help in the preparation of attractive food displays, in kitchen planning, etc. Courses in journalism, advertising and salesmanship will be helpful, while a knowledge of typing may be the entering wedge here as elsewhere.

In all home service demonstrations and home calls, the customer is encouraged to ask questions, which the home service worker must be prepared to answer. Obviously a sound background in foods and equipment, practical experience in working with food while talking about it and special instruction in the appliances used are required.

Kindliness, good nature and a sense of humor will be part of the pleasing personality which enables the home service worker to meet all types of people easily and continually. Equally important are perfect grooming, charm and social poise, for the home service worker is both a hostess and an ambassador of good will.

In a small organization, she may find that she is the entire department, and she must be versatile. The worker in a large home service department may do only one specialized phase of the work outlined in this article, yet a diversified background will be important if she is to do a perfect job.

Home service for a national manufacturer will include all of these utility activities, and in addition it usually brings the opportunity for wide contacts with the home service departments of your customer organizations, the various dealers and distributors who offer your merchandise to the public. Background material for use in demonstrations, recipes, educational literature, promotional plans, periodic services and special projects are supplied to these companies who pass on your information to the public.

If you like variety, responsibility, selling, and above all, people, you'll surely want to consider home service as a career. There is opportunity for the home economics graduate who is alert, attractive, energetic and diplomatic to enter the still-growing home service profession.

Just the place for those date dinners

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