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Home Economist in Advertising Serves the Consumer

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PERHAPS, when I’ve been a business home economist for fifty years, I’ll be able to tell what makes one successful. Since I’ve been one a comparatively short time I can only tell you how such success seems to come and what the satisfactions in my own work have been.

For a beginner the attitude toward one’s work is exceedingly important. A willingness to do hard work and eagerness to expand on new ideas not only guarantees the young home economist that she will learn at a rate she hadn’t thought possible before, but will help her find her particular place in the business world.

One of the first things a home economist learns, as she goes into a business position, is that she must be a professional woman with a well-rounded view of her whole profession. As well as being a dietitian, writer, teacher or tearoom manager, she must be her employer’s ideal of a home economist. That is, she must have some extent of understanding and knowledge in all phases of homemaking.

In the case of a writer in advertising, editorial or radio fields, it is particularly important for the home economist to understand the daily problems of the women to whom her writing is directed. When this sympathy does not exist, the home economist might write volumes on the perfect home without ever reaching the homemaker who has three small children to manage, an apartment that is poorly arranged and a husband whose appetite just doesn’t fit into the current food picture.

It seems to me that a successful home economist in business usually has certain qualities. First, she needs a sympathetic understanding of the homemakers’ problems. The home economist must be in sympathy with her level of education, her financial setup and the emotional problems and physical limitations with which all of us must cope. Second, she must understand what it is her employer wants to tell the homemaker, other than “buy my product.” Then the home economist must translate her employer’s interests through the homemaker’s viewpoint and give full value to both. This use of her training appears in such commonplace situations as writing or giving directions for the use of a product, in testing or developing a recipe or in suggesting new uses for things which the homemaker already owns.

Many home economists in business are salespeople in a sense of the word. However, their interest in the product does not end with getting it into the hands of the consumer or in selling as much as possible. The home economist’s purpose is to show the homemaker how she can reap the greatest value from her product. Multiplicity of use is of advantage both to the consumer and to the producer. The home economist whose ingenuity and imagination produces the greatest number of reasons in the homemaker’s mind for buying and using her employer’s product as well as the most efficient use of the product is the one who serves her employer and her public equally well.

In an advertising agency the home economist is one step removed from the producer. Her work might be for several or many different producers of articles used by homemakers. Thus, for each client she must have a new viewpoint. She must be able to grasp plans and policies; she must learn to whom the product will go. Beyond this, even in these days of public knowledge of home economists, she must constantly “sell” home economics as an easier way of doing the common things people have been doing for years. And in so doing, the home economist gains respect for her colleagues, her employers and herself.

Dorothy Conquest Campbell, '43, tells how to succeed as a business home economist

Dorothy Conquest Campbell, employed by the Earl Ludgin advertising agency

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