SCOTT 1908 - THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ADVERTISING

CHAPTER X: MEMORY

Our memories gradually fade with time. Professor

Ebbinghaus, of Germany, was the first to try to find

out exactly how fast our memories do fade. Since he

published his thesis many others have taken up the work,

and his and their results are fairly well established and

definite. They have found that our memories are at

their best two seconds after the experience has taken

place. After two seconds the memory fades very

rapidly, so that in twenty minutes we have forgotten

more of an experience than we shall forget in the next

thirty days.

We forget very rapidly during the first few seconds,

minutes and hours. What we remember a day is a very

small part of our experiences, but it is the part which

persists, as the memory fades very slowly after the first

day. What we remember for twenty minutes and what

we can get others to remember for that time is of great

concern, for it is what we and they remember for longer

times also.

What the practical business man wants to know about

memory can be put in two questions.

First, how can I improve my own memory?

Second, how can I so present my advertisements that

they will be remembered by the public?

It is not possible for a person with a poor memory

to develop a good one, but everyone can improve his

memory by the observance of a few well-known and

thoroughly established principles. **The** **first principle**

**is repetition**. If you want to make sure that you will

remember a name, say it over to yourself. Repeat it in

all the ways possible — say it over aloud, write it, look

at it after it is written, think how it sounded when

you heard the name, recall it at frequent periods and

until it has become thoroughly fixed in your mind.

**The second principle is intensity**. If you want to

remember a name, pay the strictest possible attention

to it. If you apply the first principle ami repeat the

name, then you should pay the maximum amount of at-

tention to every repetition. In this way the process

of learning will be so reduced that a single repetition

may be enough, and still the name may be retained, for

a long period of time.

**The third principle is that of association**. The things

which we think over, classify and systematize, and thus

get associated with our previous experience, are the

things which we commit most easily and retain the

longest.

As a boy at school I learned by repetition that Co-

lumbus discovered America in 1492. At that time

this was to me an entirely disconnected fact. It was not

associated with anything else, and so cost me great

effort of attention and frequent repetition before I had

it thoroughly memorized. At a later time I was com-

pelled to learn the approximate date of the fall of Con-

stantinople, the application of the compass to naviga-

tion, the invention of printing, the time of the activity

of Copernicus, Michelangelo, Titian, Dtirer, Holbein,

etc. Such a list of unconnected dates would have cost

me much unprofitable effort if I had been compelled

to learn them separately. As it was, I connected them

all with the date of the discovery of America, and saw

that these men and these events were all contemporane-

ous and together made what is known as the Renais-

sance.

The details of a business or professional life which

are connected in a series are not hard to learn, and

are not soon forgotten. A man may have no trouble

from forgetting the details of his business or profession,

yet may have a poor memory for all events not thus

associated.

**The fourth principle is that of ingenuity**. I remem-

ber the name of Miss Low, for she is a short woman.

I remember a friend's telephone, which is 1391, by think-

ing how unfortunate it is to have such a number to

remember — 13 is supposed to be an unlucky number,

and 91 is seven times 13.

This method is applicable only to disconnected facts

which we find difflculty in remembering by the methods

given before. It is, however, a method which was used

by the Roman oratojs and has been used more or less

ever since. There is probably no one who does not

make frequent use of it in attempting to remember

names, dates, figures, and similar data.

We all appreciate the value of a good memory, and

are willing to pay any one who will tell us how to train

ours. This condition of affairs has made "memory

training" a profitable business for the fakir. It is fairly

well established now that one's native retentiveness is

unchangeable. One who has an unretentive memory

cannot possibly change it by any method of training.

All he can do is to improve on his method of acquiring

and recording knowledge.