

HOW TO MOTIVATE REPLACEMENT PURCHASING

In many areas in the United States and in some European countries, the problem of market saturation has become a rather serious one. The woods are no longer filled with families who do not yet own a refrigerator, a television set, and countless other big-ticket items. Modern merchandising and marketing methods have enabled us to track these families down and nail their purchase orders to the barn door! So, *how* do you get a housewife with a rheumatic refrigerator to decide that it's time for a replacement? The answer, so far, has been through the development of new models and new improvements in products—or obsolescence. However, because this is no longer enough, here are some psychological techniques which we have found to be effective:

1. *Replace "Squirrel" Psychology with Renewal Philosophy.* Probably one of the major differences between consumer psychology in Europe and that in America is that the European, because of background, training, and experience, likes to hold onto things as long as possible. Americans, on the other hand, prefer to discard many things after a few years of ownership. This is due partly to high servicing costs, which cause a family to get rid of many items once they begin to need frequent repairs or do not function efficiently any longer. Since restoring an item to its original state of operation often costs almost as much as buying a new one, most families prefer to replace a product with a more up-to-date one. Economists seem to agree that this throw-away philosophy is largely responsible for our rapidly developing economy.

Europeans still need to change their attitude in this respect, and we find that to a limited extent they are doing so. We have learned that by openly discussing the advantages of this throw-away philosophy—and by analyzing the deeper reasons for it—a change of attitude can often be brought about. What is involved, of course, is a basic feeling of insecurity which many Europeans still have—the fear of being deprived, of starving, of someday being reduced to the bare necessities of life. Having lived through two ravaging world wars, they have trouble shaking off a subconscious fear that they may again be put into a similar kind of situation. There is a definite feeling of guilt associated with throwing things away; it is almost comparable to the reluctance most civilized people have about stepping on an old piece of bread lying in the road.

What we have therefore tried to do regarding the advertising of some of our European clients is to suggest the pleasures of throwing things away. This is an almost antimaterialistic kind of attitude. Furthermore, it tends to free the mind of the nagging feeling that perhaps it would be better to get rid of obsolete, outmoded possessions and not continue living in fear of what might happen.



2. *Help Others in a More Practical Way.* It used to be customary to give used clothing to less fortunate relatives or to donate it to a charitable institution. This is one way of relieving guilt feelings and obtaining justification for the purchase of new products. However, this form of absolution is becoming more and more difficult. Despite economic problems, it is quite likely that these relatives are now more able to buy the clothing they need. So we have emphasized that throwing out old things and buying new ones helps to keep the economy going, reduces unemployment, and is a much more efficient way of living.

3. *Create a Specific Life Cycle.* We have found that in some cases, products are not thrown away and replaced by new ones because many people simply do not know how long one is supposed to keep a still-functioning appliance or car. Through the creation of a definite life cycle for various types of products, this uncertainty can be eliminated, and a more rapid replacement cycle can be established. By pointing out that most people find it economically unwise to keep a new car longer than three years at the most and that it is much more satisfactory to buy a new refrigerator every five or six years, replacement can be accelerated.

4. *Suggest Multiple Ownership.* A further device which works very well is to point up the advantages of owning more than one refrigerator, more than one vacuum cleaner, more than one car, additional television sets, and even two homes—one of which should be a *vacation* home. Despite the obvious logic of multiple ownership, many of our studies show that countless men don't even have enough shoes or enough suits to meet their everyday needs!

Extending this idea, book publishers might very well suggest the purchase of two books of the same title—one to be torn apart and only several chapters taken along on a trip and the other one for the library shelf at home. And, incredible as it may seem, buying a tube of toothpaste for *each* member of the family is another possibility which has not been properly exploited.

Product replacement should not be left to just technological and aesthetic obsolescence. A clearer understanding of the deep-rooted psychological reasons for deferment of purchasing needs to be obtained in order to motivate more frequent buying. Only by understanding these hidden reasons more thoroughly is increased product penetration of saturated markets possible.

