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Anything Goes If You Use Right Pitch

IF YOU use the right pitch you can sell anything. Or, conversely, people will buy just about anything offered if they can be convinced it will make them more comfortable or happier.

Most of us turn through the advertisements looking for things we might need or want. To get a better perspective on American business ingenuity take a closer look at the many items offered for sale that you aren't in the market to buy. Somebody buys enough of them to keep the firms in business.

Food is No. 1 on everybody's shopping list — raw, pre-cooked, ready-to-serve, or being served. Fast food in the form of beef-burgers or fried chicken is popular but an eastern firm has become rated among the nation's top 50 private companies by promoting the sale of raw, plucked, naked chickens.

Another entrepreneur marketed tadpoles in plastic containers as leap year novelties. Buyers were told they would grow into frogs, presumably giving them a leap ahead, somehow.

A Californian has built a coast-to-coast business selling franchises for designing bedroom and other home closets. Most people probably build their own shelves and position their own hooks but this man sold the idea his firm can do it better.

Numerous businesses have turned to "gimmicks" and premiums to help do their selling. Sometimes more emphasis is given to the gimmicks than to the products. Prospects respond in numbers to offers of fantastic fortunes, trips, merchandise awards and bonus gifts. Products become secondary but customers buy.

Some authorities think that opportunities to start new businesses and sell new services or products are increasing. In a copyrighted interview in U.S. News & World Report (Mar. 26, 1984) Peter Drucker, management expert, said "We have on our hands an entrepreneurial boom the like of which we have not seen in a century."

The selling of ideas is important, too. An editorial in The Wall Street Journal recently discussed the

transformation of the United States from "a fairly straight-laced tradition to one in which almost no behavior is socially proscribed."

It said that "basically what has happened is that the new morality of big cities such as New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco was imposed on the rest of the country by movies, TV, magazines, advertising, music novelists, playwrights, and, through default, by organized religion."

The business world is after our money, our minds and our loyalties. We want products and services. Promoters devise clever schemes to complete the deals. A recent ad in a business magazine was headlined: "SELL DIRTY." It offered computer software it claimed would give users a "secret advantage" in any negotiation.

The topper, however, may be a book published last fall with the title "Buy Low, Sell High, Collect Early and Pay Late." This should be enough to intimidate any prospective customer.