

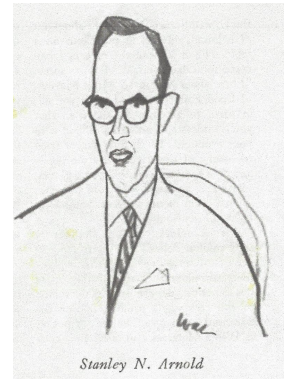
# They Bought It

Stanley N. Arnold (*The New Yorker Magazine* 10-29-1960)

---

*Notes by Bob Evelyn  
Wilmore, Kentucky; 2019.*

---



These excerpts are from an article entitled “They Bought It” from the 10-29-1960 edition of *The New Yorker* magazine. It was penned by Geoffrey T. Hellman.

The prime professional activity of Mr. Stanley N. Arnold, a marketing-and-sales-management consultant ... is the creation of something he calls business excitement.

Arnold is a fountain of ideas, many of them calculated to create business excitement for such clients as the Esso Standard Oil Company, and others.

Nobody else does just what Stanley does; impressive in view of the fact that he has [done this] by personal solicitation or negotiation in the space of only two years.

Many products are known in manufacturing and advertising circles as impulse items – things that people buy, notably in supermarkets, on the spur of external stimulus. Such items are moved from their shelves largely by the customer’s excitement ... in the face of competition from items that are virtually identical.

How does Stanley sell himself and his ideas to potential customers? Take, for example, American Tobacco. Their offices had cautioned Stanley that security was very important. He called and said, “I’ll pick you up for lunch.” On the way down the elevator he started talking about security. Arriving at the main floor he had two armed guards waiting, who escorted them to a Wells Fargo armored truck. They sat on money crates, driving to one of Stanley’s banks. The guards escorted them to the vaults. He took a moneybag out of a box that he had rented, and he took his presentation out of the bag and read it to them. They bought the ideas.

According to Stanley, nearly 60 million dollars were given away in prize contests the previous year. In planning stimulating events it is sometimes desirable to key the theme to the company’s product. Prizes are translated into showmanship.

Stanley once got an idea sitting in his tub.

If an idea is fabulous enough it doesn’t have to be keyed to the product.

He once ran a campaign for Piel’s Beer Company that had nothing to do with beer. In 1956 Piel’s wanted to get a bigger selling space in stores and increase its sales. Stanley took an option on a 5-acre island near Nassau that was for sale. He sold Piel’s management on a plan called “Treasure Island.” He bought tens of thousands of dollars of wonderful prizes. He filled some treasure chests with certificates good for these items and buried them on the island. The island itself was the grand prize. The contest was to write the best caption for a cartoon which was advertised in New York, Philadelphia, the metropolitan areas of Connecticut, and New Jersey for four weeks. There were 140,000 entries. He flew the 8 finalists to Nassau for three days, culminating in the treasure hunt. He gave them maps and shovels. What did this do for Piel’s?

As a consequence to the business excitement engendered by this adventure, supermarket chains installed 10,000 Piel’s display pieces in their stores. Piel’s sales in supermarkets rose 27% above the same period the previous year; the greatest increase in Piel’s history.

Stanley enjoys art but has said repeatedly that the most beautiful picture in the world is a steadily ascending bar on a sales chart. But he doesn’t believe in pushing this bar up by price cutting or below-cost selling.

Stanley reads all the time. “I find there’s nothing I’ve read or heard that I can’t apply to some problem.”

Stanley insists he does not work for the money. “I’m helping to keep business good, and if business is good we’ll be all right.”

According to Stanley’s wife, he “throws off ideas faster than anyone else I’ve ever met. “

“He has this *abundance* of creative thought.”

According to Stanley, “I honestly believe in helping people lead better and more exciting lives.”

### **Bob’s closing thoughts ...**

More than anything else this article illustrates the power of ideas and creative thought! Here is a man that built his entire career on ideas. But let us not think that Mr. Arnold possessed some special gift that none of us can have. He may have been especially gifted in the “creativity” category; but he simply worked at generating ideas. He took the time. He paid attention as he read, always looking for an idea that could be used. Any of us can do that ... and we can cultivate a growing awareness of good ideas that can be used in our business life.

Consider his “prime professional activity” ... creating business excitement! We can all strive toward that goal – to make business and the lives of all those around us exciting! You don’t need to have thousands of dollars to offer contests as Stanley did. You can create business excitement in your own way, just by being intentional about looking for ideas to implement in your career.

So – put on your thinking caps – and let’s bring some “business excitement” to the world around us. Great success is sure to follow.

*Notes by Bob Evely  
bob@EvelyLLC.com*