

The Theory and Practice of  
Selling the AGA Cooker



The 1935 Precedent

# THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SELLING THE AGA COOKER

1935 : New Standard AGA

2012 : AGA Total Control

In 1935 AGA launched the New Standard AGA aimed at expanding in the fledgling AGA UK market with a British developed and made variation to the original Swedish designed AGA cooker.

David Ogilvy, a rising star in the sales and marketing team produced a sales manual to go with the launch. Fifty years later Fortune magazine still considered it the best sales manual ever written. He also produced a comprehensive marketing strategy for the launch - a precedent document in our archive, most useful in preparing the Total Control launch.

A protégé of the Chief Executive of the parent company of AGA, Allied Ironfounders, he worked on the Group account when he took forays into advertising with his brother's firm, Mather & Crowther, later Ogilvy & Mather.

David Ogilvy emigrated to the USA in 1938 and became the King of Madison Avenue and the inspiration for the 'Mad Men' TV Series.

As AGA launches a new generation of products with AGA Total Control, the excitement is the same that the product is relevant to the lifestyles of consumers and many of the themes raised remain at the heart of the story of AGA Marvel.

Toronto

January 2012

## FOREWORD

In Great Britain, there are twelve million households. One million of these own motorcars. Only ten thousand own AGA cookers. No household which can afford a motorcar can afford to be without an AGA.....

There are certain universal rules. Dress quietly and shave well. Do not wear a bowler hat. Go to the back door (most salesmen go to the front door, a manoeuvre always resented by maid and mistress alike).... Tell the person who opens the door frankly and briefly what you have come for; it will get her on your side. Never on any account get in on false pretences.

Study the best time of day for calling; between twelve and two pm you will not be welcome, whereas a call at an unorthodox time of day - after supper in the summer for instance - will often succeed.....In general, study the methods of your competitors and do the exact opposite.

Find out all you can about your prospects before you call on them; their general living conditions, wealth, profession, hobbies, friends and so on. Every hour spent in this kind of research will help you and impress your prospect.....

The worst fault a salesman can commit is to be a bore..... Pretend to be vastly interested in any subject the prospects shows an interest in.

The more she talks the better, and if you can make her laugh you are several points up.....

Perhaps the most important thing of all is to avoid standardisation in your sales talk. If you find yourself one fine day saying the same things to a bishop and a trapezist, you are done for.

When the prospect tries to bring the interview to a close, go gracefully. It can only hurt you to be kicked out....

The more prospects you talk to, the more sales you expose yourself to, the more orders you will get. But never mistake a quantity of calls for quality of salesmanship.

Quality of salesmanship involves energy, time and knowledge of the product... We may analyse it under two main headings, ATTACK and DEFENCE.....

# ATTACK

## 1. General Statement

Most people have heard something about the AGA cooker. They vaguely believe it to involve some new method of cooking. They may have heard that it works on the principle of "heat storage". Heat storage is the oldest known form of cooking. Aborigines bake their hedgehogs in the ashes of a dying fire..... Having got some preliminary remarks... off your chest, find out as quickly as possible which of the particular sales arguments that follow is most likely to appeal to your audience, and give that argument appropriate emphasis. Stockbrokers will appreciate No.2. Doctors will understand No. 9. Cooks will be won over with No. 5. Only on rare occasions will you have the opportunity of getting through all twelve arguments.

## 2. Economy

The AGA is the only cooker in the world with a guaranteed maximum fuel consumption. It is guaranteed to burn less than £4 worth of fuel a year..... Stress the fact that no cook can make her AGA burn more fuel than this, however stupid, extravagant or careless she may be, or however much she may cook. If more fuel is consumed, it is being stolen, and the police should be called in immediately.....

## 3. Always Ready

You cannot surprise an AGA. It is always on its toes, ready for immediate use at any time of the day or night. It is difficult for a cook or housewife who has not known an AGA to realise exactly what this will mean to her. Tell her she can come down in the middle of the night and roast a goose, or even refill her hot water bottle..... Hot breakfast may be given to the wretched visitor who has to start back to London at zero hour on Monday morning.

## 4. Cleanliness

Which may be coupled with beauty, is a virtue sometimes better appreciated by the prospect than by the salesman. The woman who does the work in a house spends more time on cleaning than on anything else.....

The AGA is innately clean.... Ladies can cook a dinner on the AGA in evening dress. Doctors will agree that it is so clean that it would not look out of place in the sterilising room of an operating theatre.....

An occasional flowery phrase is called for to allow your enthusiasm full scope in describing the beauty and cleanliness of the AGA. Think some up and produce them extempore.

## 5. Cookery

It is hopeless to try and sell a single AGA unless you know something about cookery and appear to know more than you actually do. It is not simply a question of knowing which part of the AGA bakes and which simmers. You must be able to talk to cooks and housewives on their own ground.....

AGA grilling should be featured, particularly to men, who are almost always interested in this if in no other method of cooking; it is the only culinary operation they ever see and understand.....

The Roasting Oven. Learn to recognise vegetarians on sight. It is painful indeed to gush over roasting and grilling to a drooping face which has not enjoyed the pleasure of a beefsteak for several years.

Before you open the top oven door, either actually or by description, forestall the inevitable observation that "it looks very small". It is an optical illusion... Demonstrate with exaggerated groping how far back the oven goes...

Baking interests most women more than roasting. Without beating about the bush, tell the prospect that pastry baking, bread baking and cake baking are star turns.... Most women are subject to baking fits, and the ability to give this idiosyncrasy full rein may be enlarged upon at some length....

Casseroles and stews – luxuries where the gas or electricity bill has to be remembered – become the master passion of the AGA cook. Stock, ham, and porridge cook all night long and lose their terrors for the dyspeptic. Cure the world of stomach ache and heartburn – what a mission!.....

## **6. Appeal to Cooks**

If there is a cook in the house, she is bound to have the casting vote over the new cookers. Butter her up. Never go above her head. Before the sale and afterwards as a user a cook can be your bitterest enemy or your best friend; she can poison a whole district or act as your secret representative. The AGA will mean for her an extra hour in bed, and a kitchen as clean as a drawing room....

## **7. Appeal to Men**

When selling to men who employ a staff or whose wives do their cooking, make a discreet appeal to their human instincts. The AGA takes the slavery out of kitchen work. It does not cook the cook. It civilises life in the kitchen. It can be to women what the motor car is to men. And compare the prices! If you can work on this appeal to a man's better nature and combine it with an appeal to his pocket and his belly, you cannot fail to secure an order.

## **8. Appeal to Special Classes**

Children can be given the run of the AGA kitchen for making toffee and so on. There is no danger of burning, electric shocks, gassing or explosion. The blind will like to hear that Dr. Dalen is himself blind. Cooks will like to hear that Ambrose Heath himself uses an AGA. Doctors will admire your perspicacity if you tell them that..... if a case keeps them long after the normal hour for dinner they will get an unspoilt meal on their return to an AGA house.....

There is no end to the special appeal AGA has for every conceivable class and profession.

Think it out.

## 9. Kitchen Warming and Air Conditioning

The AGA warms an average sized kitchen even in the depths of winter, acting like a radiator for approximately 37 feet square surface area, at a constant temperature of about 90 degrees Fahrenheit. A little heat goes a long way if is constant...

## 10. Summary of Miscellaneous Economies

The AGA means fuel saving, staff reduction, reduced expenditure on cleaning materials, reduction of meat shrinkage and food wastage, abolition of chimney-sweeps; painting and redecorating is unheard of; electric irons and their antics are unnecessary; raids on registry offices for new servants become a thing of the past; the house can be let or sold at any time on its kitchen; bilious attacks and doctor's bills are halved; restaurants are seldom visited, and, as the French say: "The AGA owner eats best at home."

## 11. Wise-Cracking

The longer you talk to a prospect, the better, and you will not do this if you are a bore. Pepper your talk with anecdotes and jokes. Accumulate a repertoire of illustration. Above all, laugh till you cry every time the prospect makes the joke about the AGA Khan. A deadly serious demonstration is bound to fail. If you can't make a lady laugh, you certainly cannot make her buy.

# DEFENCE

## 1. General Advice

The ideal to aim at is to make your attack so thorough that the enemy is incapable of counterattack.... In practice, however, you must always be faced sooner or later with questions and objections, which may indeed be taken as a sign that the prospect's brain is in working order, and that she is conscientiously considering the AGA as a practical proposition for herself. Some salesmen expound their subject academically, so that at the end the prospect feels no more inclination to buy the AGA than she would to buy the planet Jupiter after a broadcast from the Astronomer Royal. A talkative prospective is a good thing.

## 2. Detailed objection

*"It is too big for my kitchen?"*

Boloney always. It only looks big because it does not, like gas stoves, stand on legs. Make the objection a pretext for going into the kitchen to measure, and continue the conversation there.... Continue: There is no danger of getting burned with an AGA, so that it is possible to go right up to it. You have to give a range a very wide berth.....

*"Can the AGA give off unpleasant fumes?"*

The flue construction makes this quite impossible; a striking manifestation of the inventor's genius.

### *“Can the AGA make toast?”*

Extremely well.... To the prospect who has positive information that her neighbour's AGA makes toast like white tiles, admit that the old AGA was rather weak in this regard; the present cooker is so fast that it roasts diabolically well.

### *“Does the smell of food cooking on the AGA penetrate all over the house?”*

Nothing so impolite. The ovens ventilate direct into the flue so that all cooking smells are dispersed up the chimney. How different from ordinary ovens, which irresponsibly discharge their perfume into the kitchen.

Continue: Kitchen conditions are improved....

### *“My cooker must heat the bath water as well.”*

Explain that, as somebody with experience of heating engineering, you would strongly advise one heat unit for cooking and another separate unit for hot water; to combine the two units result inevitably in outrageous fuel consumption, and that kind of Victorian inefficiency which means hot bath and cold oven, or hot oven and cold bath.

Continue: The AGA is called a “cooker”. And, by heaven, that is what it is” Off you go again on the cooking advantages.

### *“I have heard of somebody who is dissatisfied.”*

Probably at second hand. These malicious reports are spread by jealous people who have not got an AGA. Express grave concern and try to find out the name and address so that you can rush away then and there to put matters right. In this way you will give the prospect a foretaste of willing service.

Continue: Do you know so-and so, who has just put in an AGA?

Go on mentioning all the satisfied owners in the district until you find someone whose name is familiar to the prospect.

## **3. Competitors**

Try and avoid being drawn into discussing competitive makes of cooker, as it introduces a negative and defensive atmosphere. On no account sling mud – it can carry very little weight, coming from you, and it will make the prospect distrust your integrity and dislike you.

The best way to tackle the problem is to find out all you possibly can about the merits, faults and sales arguments of competitors, and then keep quiet about them. Profound knowledge of other cookers will help you put your positive case for AGA more convincingly....

## 4. Price Defence

It pays to approach this subject off your own bat and in your own time... But sooner or later a prospect will ask you the price before you are ready. The way you reply is the supreme test of your salesmanship. Your voice, your manner, your expression, even your smell, must be controlled and directed to soften the blow.....

The way you continue the conversation after announcing the price is of great importance. It is no use fatuously remarking that it is "not really expensive." You must be specific, definite and factual. The prospect is not interested in your personal opinion as to what is or is not expensive for her. The following suggestions will give you an indication of the kind of way to cope with the reactions of different prospects to the price announcement:-

*"It is too much money for me."*

A famous surgeon once asked by a friend how much he had charged a very poor patient for removing his appendix. "A hundred pounds," the surgeon replied. "But how much had he?" asked his friend. "A hundred pounds," replied the surgeon. Most AGA prospects have got £47 10s.

If you can't get it someone else will.

*"Our household is too small for an AGA to pay us."*

Some of the advantages are really heaven-sent in a small house. The AGA is a great boon to the "owner-cook." It is in fact, her maid.

Continue: "AGA installed" not only makes it easy to get a cook but may fairly be said to put the value of the house in an entirely different class.

*"The price will come down."*

If you wait a year, and even if the price did come down (which it won't), you will still be out of pocket by another year's fuel consumption.

Continue: The AGA will never be mass-produced; like a Rolls-Royce it is too good for mass production. If you could buy a Rolls which was so economical in fuel that it did 2,000 miles to a gallon of petrol, what would you be willing to pay for such a car? The analogy is a close one.

*"In these hard times one must be careful of heavy capital outlay"*

Yes, but in these low-interest bearing times you will not find many safe investments to pay a dividend as big as the dividend represented by the AGA fuel saving.

*"We're getting old. It would not pay us."*

Don't forget that the AGA increases expectation of life.

People come to live life more and more in the house as they grow old. A house which is smoothly run means everything to old people, and food comes to pay an increasingly important part in their lives as death approaches. And what an heirloom!

Continue: The AGA promotes digestion.....

David Ogilvy concludes:

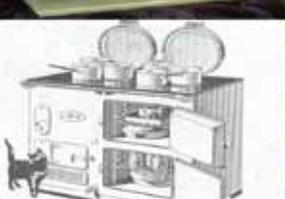
*“The good salesman combines the tenacity of a bulldog with the manners of a spaniel. If you have any charm, ooze it.”*

*The*  
**“New Standard”**  
**AGA COOKER**  
*gives you*  
*better cooking, more leisure . .*  
*a Guaranteed maximum fuel cost*  
*of less than £4 a year*



**Some points of the**  
**“New Standard”**  
**AGA Cooker:**

- The most economical in the world.
- Independent of gas or electricity.
- Burns day and night.
- No morning fires to light.
- Easy to clean, simple to manage.
- Always ready for immediate use.
- No fumes, or cooking smells.
- Extremely rapid boiling, safe simmering.
- All cooking temperatures automatically controlled.
- Two big ovens, two large hot-plates.





**AGA**  
THE WORLD'S  
BEST BAKING COOKER  
AND WATER HEATER

AGA is the only cooker that can be used as a water heater. It's the most efficient way to heat water, and it's the only way to get hot water on demand. AGA is the only cooker that can be used as a water heater. It's the most efficient way to heat water, and it's the only way to get hot water on demand.

AGA is the only cooker that can be used as a water heater. It's the most efficient way to heat water, and it's the only way to get hot water on demand.

How to join the **AGAstocracy**

...and make life a bed of roses



THE ELECTRIC BLUE AGA



The Legendary **AGA Cooker**

**AGA**

Cook better  
Eat better  
Taste better  
Live better






Total Control

Simply better at cooking