

The Hidden Perfumer

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Within the subject of "Perfumery Training," I will devote myself to what I consider of prime importance: the choice of the candidate with the best potential and chance for success.

Most people have a sense of smell but not many have excellent "noses." Few can think in odor terms and even fewer can think creatively. An analogy in another art form would be music where most people can distinguish a melody; many can remember and even hear it in their mind, but few can create one in their mind.

In all other art forms, the prospective practitioners can readily avail themselves of the tools needed. Their time, energy and the materials used are important only to themselves, and their successes or failures similarly are also important only to themselves. In our industry, the tools are not known or available to the general public so self-training and the development of perfumery ability is impossible. As a result, no pool of potential perfumers exists. The choice of trainees, in many cases, has been made on a purely subjective basis, from people already in our industry, i.e., lab assistants, compounders, and others. The training is time consuming and costly. Consequently, the result must be, but often is not successful.

How does one find the person who can think odor creatively—the Hidden Perfumer? That is my theme.

There are a number of things to look for in a prospective trainee. First is a chemical back-

ground. While not absolutely essential, it is of great help to the perfumer's understanding of the relationship between structure and odor, and this insight will help in line modifications and substitutions. It will also help in functional perfumery, especially if the company has done little or no research in functional testing. Also, the trainee will be able to understand and appreciate the make up of naturals and use this knowledge in attempting to use nuances attributable to these naturals.

Secondly, higher schooling is also important. It shows dedication and persistence in the learning process which is essential to a perfumer. It also gives the tools for verbalization which will be necessary, especially when communicating with customers.

Thirdly, the trainee's background and interests are to be considered. Interest in the arts indicates an esthetic sensitivity and possibly a creative bent.

We now go on to a testing procedure which will show the olfactory ability and verbalization potential of a candidate. Given three blotters in a triangulation test, the candidate is asked to pick the two similar ones and to describe odor reactions. A good verbalization by esthetics, recognition or analogy to past experiences demonstrates an intellectual curiosity which I deem to be very important. In fact, the test materials are chosen with regard to the candidate's background in order to bring to light this facet. Urban dwellers

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will be shown food, citrus, spice and fruit odors, whereas country dwellers will also have essential oils and florals normal to their background included.

A list of products in approximate increasing order of difficulty in selection would be something like this:

oil orange vs. oil lemon
oil cinnamon vs. oil cassia
oil clove bud vs. oil clove stem
oil orange vs. oil grapefruit
oil tangerine vs. oil mandarin
oil cassia vs. cinnamaldehyde
oil clove stem vs. eugenol
oil cinnamon vs. oil cinnamon leaf Ceylon
oil anise vs. anethole
anethole vs. methyl chavicol
oil spearmint vs. oil peppermint
oil lemon exp vs. oil lime exp
oil lime exp vs. oil bergamot
oil lavandin vs. oil lavender 50
oil lavender 42 vs. oil lavender 50
oil lavandin grosso vs. oil lavandin barre
allyl caproate vs. allyl cyclohexyl propionate

oil geranium Moroccan vs. oil geranium Bourbon

oil anise vs. oil basil

eucalyptol vs. oil eucalyptus 80/85

ionones, alpha and beta

methyl ionones, alpha and beta

various rose alcohols, DMO, citronellol nerol, geraniol and various isomer ratios

The number of items shown and the degree of difficulty between the items are dependent on the time available, the number of participants and the quality of the responses. It will soon be apparent who has a poor sense of smell or selectivity. Remember, the more time spent on these tests and the evaluations, the better change of picking the best person or persons.

Having been selected, the successful applicants should be employed in the odor quality control lab. Here they will become extremely knowledgeable about the odors of all raw materials, both chemical and natural. During this period, they should also be indoctrinated into the chemistry and composition of these products. At some time, the trainees will start thinking of these products, not as to whether they are equivalent to the odor target, but in other aspects. They will begin to remember and recall the odor in their minds when the name of the material is mentioned. Some will begin to think almost instinctively about the material's esthetics and possible uses. At this point, their superior who has been teaching, inculcating and monitoring their performance and progress will be able to categorize them into two areas.

- The person who can only perform as an odor quality control person.
- The person who has some creative thoughts and should go on to further perfumery training with a senior perfumer.

The choice of the second will or should give any superior many soul-searching moments. However, from my past experience, I know a number of perfumers who have gone this route and done very well.

One thing the trainee must understand is that creativity sometimes flowers later in some people and that the road to success is long and hard, with moments of doubt, frustration and despair. This is normal for any creative effort.

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