

by CHUCK CUMMING

# The Profit Pro Shop

## YOUR ATTITUDE IS IMPORTANT

Merchandising in the pro shop incorporates a great many jobs. One of the hardest of these is tuning yourself and your employees in on customer relations and customer attitudes. This phase of advertising, merchandising and selling is, or could be, the difference between your shop being a mediocre business or a successful business.

Every golf course has people. No two golf courses has people of the same temperament, living scale, and so on. To adjust yourself to dealing with the president of a large company, a doctor, a lawyer or a candlestick maker, means that you have to project yourself to him in a sincere way so that your willingness to do business with him, to be his friend and to help him with his golf game and select appropriate equipment comes through.

There are hundreds of golf clubs and categories of private country clubs where the golf professional must know every member by name. This idea is good regardless of what type of club you are associated with. If you are one of the few who can associate people with their correct names every time you see them, you are fortunate. If you have a hard time remembering names, I would suggest taking a memory course of which there are always several located in most large cities, or you can subscribe to a correspondence course. It can really pay off for you in the long run. You know yourself how nice it is to have a sales person address you by name. It is a little personal touch and is the first step in making a sale.

All golf professionals, because of the nature of their business, make lasting friendships with a few of their members. This is natural. We must realize, however, that a good golf professional must be friends with everyone, even the chronic

fault-finding member for whom nothing seems to be satisfactory. How hard it is to be nice to a man or woman who is always giving you hell for a mistake or who is naturally over-demanding. It takes a good man to smile and try to satisfy an irate customer. When you can do this, you have made a friend, you have a customer who will sing your praises to every other member. It is not always easy to do. I know from my own experience that when we goof on a customer's order once and try to rectify the mistake, we just seem to make one mistake after another. This does nothing but aggravate the situation and an already-irritated professional, and it also irritates the sales department. Nothing goes right and it seems to get worse and worse. Once we correct things, though, we have a friend. A golf professional must do the same.

One of the hardest things you and your assistants have to do is make up your minds that satisfying an irate customer is worth your time. Remember, you were hired by the club to be a golf professional to every member. When you have turned the irate customer into a satisfied customer, you have taken another step toward doing the job you were hired to do.

If you are employed at a semi-private or municipal golf course or if you own your own golf course, the approach may be different. If your customer is paying daily green fees, you can afford to tell the player to take his golf and his business someplace else, but you really haven't given you or your customer any type of service or satisfaction when you do this.

So far this sounds as if the fault were the customer's. Not true. A golf professional can't stay on an even keel day after day any more than a customer or member can. A professional who gets up grouchy

can really be a bearcat in the shop the rest of the day. A lot of professionals get rid of this "down" feeling by hitting a bucket of golf balls or by giving a lesson or just by getting away from the shop for a few hours. If I have had a particularly bad day, I compensate for it by doing a lot of work, either physical work, if possible, or paperwork. Anything that I can put my mind to and that allows me to completely forget my sales job for a few hours. This method helps me. Because all of us are different, each of us must find his own method of relieving tension. It is surprising what hard work can do and how it can change one's perspective on the whole day.

A few pointers in transforming your dissatisfied customer into a satisfied customer.

1. Listen to his or her story or complaint;
2. Rectify this mistake or complaint as soon as you possibly can. Make your adjustments on equipment at once. If it is the manufacturer's fault get in touch with him or his sales representative immediately;
3. Do not lie to your customer;
4. If the item must be returned to the manufacturer, do so at once and notify the customer that you have returned the merchandise. Also notify him as soon as the item has been repaired or replaced;
5. If the complaint does not cover equipment, talk to your customer, so that you can iron out any differences between you. Remember, if you can talk to him, you can rectify any error on his part or your part, but if nothing is done, the sore will only fester and become blown out of proportion;
6. Remember, a smile is worth a thousand words.

If you become more conscious of your attitude toward different kinds of people, they will respond to you as a friend and as a customer, if you allow them. □