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The Professional Approach

IT'S UNLOADING TIME

You probably should not be sitting down now reading this issue of *GOLFDOM* because now you should be concentrating on "unloading" all the inventory freight you have been carrying through the spring and summer. If you still have a bunch of merchandise left, you have speculated as long as you possibly can about its "saleability." Let's discuss a few of the "do's and don'ts" to help you make some money on golf shop sales.

Don't make the assumption that your selling season on spring and summer merchandise extends into September and October. Look at the local department store advertising. Their spring and summer merchandise has been on sale since mid-May. If you haven't sold yours by now chances are slim to none that you will ever be able to sell it at retail. To make money or to minimize losses, merchandise must turn over. The only way you turn merchandise over is to sell it—at some price.

Don't delay in getting the first big sale going right now. The first two weeks in July are usually the prime target dates for that sale. A sale at a later date creates selling conflicts with your regular fall and winter merchandise.

Don't be reluctant to order some new merchandise specifically for your sales. The worst kind of sale you can possibly have is one that consists of merchandise that has been "picked over" for the last three or four months. The reductions on the new merchandise need not cut into your profit margin if you keep a close check on manufacturers that are offering close-out prices on certain items in their lines.

Don't ever make a decision that you will carry this year's merchandise over to next year. Why? Because you're in a fashion business and fashions change continuously and

rapidly. What might have been a good seller this year might be 180 degrees away from what's going to sell next year. You cannot afford to gamble your money on what's going to sell next year.

Don't let your sale run forever. If it doesn't sell the first week or two, chances are slim that it will ever sell. Give the junk to a charity and at least salvage something by using it as a business expense for tax purposes.

Do something creative this year with your sale. Don't drag out the same old table and signs that you have used for the last 10 years. Mix your "sale" merchandise in with your "for sale" merchandise, so that the people will have to look at the new merchandise as well. Maybe they will buy some of the new stuff if they are not interested in the sale merchandise. Who knows? At least it is worth a try.

Do something to let your customers know that you are having a sale. Send them a post card or a letter. Call them, but do whatever you need to do to make them aware that you have a sale going on. Your competitors (the retail stores) spend millions letting people know that merchandise is on sale.

Do a job with your sale that lets you reach that customer who never buys anything at your shop. Some people never buy anything unless they think they are getting a bargain. Concentrate on these people, because you might have a chance of turning them into regular customers at your golf shop. Who knows?

Do a selling job at your sale just as you would at any other time of the year. Fit them, alter them, test them and gift wrap them. Perform all those other things that go along with good merchandising.

Do make the sale a good one by giving liberal reductions. Token discounts of 10 or 15 per cent are not

a great inducement to a buying spree. Remember, a sale should offer the customer an opportunity to indulge himself a bit at bargain prices. One essential of a good sale is to make the customer come away feeling a little smug about being such a smart shopper.

Do the sale right because it is your only shot at correcting some of the buying mistakes you made last winter and spring. And please don't view the shop sale as a burden or a problem. It's an opportunity to recover some of your investment. It's an opportunity to minimize losses. It's an opportunity to get new customers. And in the right framework, it's an opportunity to make money. To do it right you have to work at it and make it a part of your operations.

I know that some golf professionals are dead set in their thinking that sales are not a part of the regular merchandising program in the golf shop. Why they think this way is a mystery to me. I have to assume that they think that sales cheapen the professional image of the golf shop. If this is true, which it is not, then Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman-Marcus, Bergdorf-Goodman and all the elite stores in the country are cheapening their images by running sales. And they have a bunch of sales. And, quite candidly, I have never heard anyone refer to Neiman-Marcus as a "discount center."

Use the "big boys" in retailing as a marker for the value of sales. They would not have sales if it were not necessary—necessary in the sense that they cannot afford to tie up their money in merchandise that will not sell at retail—period.

So get busy and unload that merchandise now. It's taking up the space and investment capital that could be occupied by merchandise that will sell at retail. That's where you make your money. □