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## THE PROFESSIONAL APPROACH

### “BRING” YOUR CLIENTELE TO THE SHOW

For those golf professionals attending the PGA Merchandise Show this month, the above is especially important. The show is one of the greatest events in the industry and provides the golf professional an unparalleled opportunity to “cover the marketplace.” But even the experienced professional knows how easily overwhelmed he can become by the panorama and dazzle of the merchandise displays. Resisting the impulse to buy everything in sight is not impossible, if the professional restricts his buying to those items with the greatest appeal to his members. By viewing each exhibit with only his clientele in mind, the professional can avoid overbuying and buying inappropriate merchandise.

All too often when buying at the show the professional clouds his mind with many extraneous thoughts. Reflect for a few minutes about past buying situations. Try to remember what was primary in your mind when you were buying. Were you thinking about how much money you were going to spend? Did you think about what merchandise you personally liked best? Did you think only about what items sold well last year? Were your final choices determined solely by the salesman? Or were you thinking about the members for whom you were buying?

Your one advantage over other retailers is that you can pinpoint your buying needs. Don't preclude that edge by buying haphazardly.

Your buying plan can be as informal or as elaborate as you wish to make it. Even minimal records still will produce a more accurate buying system, as long as there is some kind of plan that mir-

rors realistically your clientele's buying habits. The more detailed the buying scheme is, of course, the closer you will come to pinpointing your needs.

As part of your equipment buying plan, check before you get to the show those members who are likely to buy new sets of clubs. You can do this by simply going through your storage room and looking at the sets stored there. At the same time, figure out who might be buying new golf bags next season and order accordingly.

If you are associated with a public course, your buying problems are greater than those at a private club. You have a more variable market. You must keep reliable inventory records that show you what items sold and what didn't.

The same diligent approach should be applied to the buying of soft goods, shoes and other items. Again, records are necessary to align your buying with your customers' needs. Common sense dictates that you don't stock \$50 slacks and \$17 knit shirts at a public fee course that charges \$1.50 for green fees. Nor do you buy in small sizes for a membership whose average age is 50 years. You do not buy “mod” clothes for conservative clients; nor do you buy conservative apparel for customers who normally buy “high fashion” or designer clothes.

Another buying method that will help you focus on your clientele is simply to ask some of your good customers what they would like to see in the shop. They may give you some insight into what items you should buy for “futures.” Ask whether they intend to buy a new set of clubs this year. There is no harm in that, and the affirmative responses previous to buying at the show will help minimize overbuying. This same practice also will prove fruitful in apparel.

Another buying question that needs

attention is, Why do so many golf shops sell the same merchandise? It's hard to change equipment items; that's obvious. But why does everything else have to be so homogeneous? Are you giving your customers unique items or are you offering the same items they can buy at 10 other stores? If you carry the same name brand line of knit shirts that several downtown stores carry, why should anyone buy shirts from you? Out of loyalty? Nobody thinks that way any more. People buy because of price, quality and service. If your members' wives bypass your shop, where do you think most of their husbands' golf clothes come from? Downtown, of course.

So, think about giving your members something different. One professional advises imprinting the club logo on everything he sells. You may not want to go to that extreme degree. The point he makes is that by adding the emblem on a shirt or blouse that item becomes unique. You might experiment by using only a few items to start with.

If you don't buy the idea at all, then think about diversifying from the usual range of apparel sold in pro shops. Try some new lines. Try some untried areas of merchandising. Give members something they cannot get somewhere else. If in the past you have stocked only knit shirts and golf slacks, try stocking sports coats, ties, street shoes. Women's apparel offers unlimited diversification.

People want and demand change. If they were content with the same things year in and out, you wouldn't have to worry about buying, because you could simply say, “Send me what I bought last year.”

Give your members something different; give them what they want. Ask yourself the basic question, “For whom do I buy?” □