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## THE PROFESSIONAL APPROACH

### NEW BREED OF GOLF PROFESSIONAL

A new breed of golf professional has emerged since the late 1960s—a phenomenon that has coincided with the land development explosion. Most golf courses being built today are intergral parts of large land developments. The reason for this marriage is the enormous cost of golf. The only way to justify that cost is to assign part of it to land development as an inducement for people to buy lots.

The golf professional at one of these developments is expected to be a miracle worker, but at the same time, he has an opportunity to become more financially independent than he could under “normal” working conditions.

We have stated before that a good golf professional must be very diversified, if he is to perform well. The “land development” professional must be even more diversified, because the spectrum of his activity has literally exploded into something quite large and different, at least in the initial stages. He has to be a special breed and he has to be the kind of man who is looking for entirely different challenges.

In the past, this guy has been somewhat snubbed by the rank and file, because they felt he (as a golf director or whatever) was not necessarily performing those specific duties traditional to the golf profession. I expect, however, that in the next 20 years, this will become the epitome of the profession.

Coincidentally, I am the operating officer of a land development company that is presently developing a community of homes centered around golf, tennis, swimming and other activities. In my opinion, the golf professional we have is without question one of the key men on the management team. He isn't a golf director in the traditional

sense. He is a corporate officer and a fine golf professional. I would like to think of him as a corporate professional, and in this case, he is a major stockholder in the company, which broadens his involvement even more.

Now, why is this man so important? As I have said, golf is an expensive undertaking. A first-class golf operation requires a \$2.5 to \$3 million investment in a course, clubhouse, land, maintenance center and equipment. That's a lot of money to spend just to go “into a business.” Once the investment is made, then one is faced with operating costs that might soar up to \$500,000 a year or more. With that kind of money at stake, would you trust the judgment of land developers, engineers or planners who don't have a close association with golf? Certainly not. You find the right golf professional who can adjust to the needs of the times. This man must understand what has to be done and understand the complexities of land development and golf. Remember, the cost of golf precludes a disassociation from land developments; that's the thrust of the future.

A brief outline of what we expect from our corporate professional follows:

1. He is responsible for the design, construction and completion of the golf course within budget and time frameworks;
2. He must develop a membership package which yields sufficient profits based on the investment;
3. He must then sell those 300, 400 or 600 memberships;
4. He controls the design function of the clubhouse, maintenance center, and other recreational areas;
5. He has the responsibility of staffing all golf and recreational facilities;
6. When the doors are opened, he is responsible for everything outside of

the land development proper;

7. He is responsible to a corporate board of directors, who are profit-oriented—quite a change from a country club board;

8. He is not just a golf professional in the literal sense; he is a vital factor in the success of a multi-million dollar business.

What I've just summarized is a mouthful. The most logical man to fill these shoes is a golf professional who has varied talents. These talents must have a great deal of depth. Of course, some will glance over the list and say that he's no golf professional. I say that he is a golf professional of the first order. Through his energy and talent, he is helping to provide another golf facility that will provide jobs and positions for golf professionals for many years to come.

And with the good must come the bad. Even though the corporate professional has an opportunity to be financially successful, he will encounter problems unique to his position. He is up to his ears in budgets, cost controls and profits. Everything he does is related to a total picture, not just to golf. He can affect land sales in a good, mediocre or bad way.

Conversely, the success of the land development directly affects his own success. He must be on the job 365 days a year for the first eight to 10 years, if he is going to spend his later winters in the South of France. He is a risk taker, gambling his future, with no guarantees. It's risky, but if he wins, he wins big.

In summary, let me say that the new kind of professional—the corporate professional—is not a man who should be looked down on by his peers. If he accomplishes what he has set out to do, he may be creating a good job in the future for one of your assistants or maybe even for you. Think about it. □