



Club Ties: Why Knot Start One?

In the old days, established clubs traditionally offered their members three club neckties: the winter stripe, the summer stripe, and the crest or symbol. All three were distinctive, and if a member didn't like one he'd wear another.

Today the symbol tie stands alone. The striped versions have lost their exclusivity in the colorful confusion of look-alikes and outright copies sold by haberdashers.

Now it's more important than ever for a club to have a successful tie. Particularly since there's a surge in the wearing of "identity" ties at executive levels.

A good club tie is not just a happy "extra." It's a prestige builder for members and club alike. It mingles with important people in strategic places. It builds camaraderie and recognition, even among strangers. "I see by your tie that you are . . ." makes a great opener at conferences and cocktails. In fact, a good club tie is designed to be recognizable in places other than the club.

What are the factors in its success?

Foremost is the personal involvement of house committee and directors. It's the club's tie, worthy of top-level attention. Directors must personally guide design, quality, selection of supplier, pricing policies and promotion of the tie.

This is not to cut the pro out of it. Active club ties are excellent traffic builders for the pro shop. Because the pro spends no time on design and negotiations, takes no risk, and puts up no money, he is able to handle the club tie for a

small mark-up, enabling a truly luxurious tie for the price.

It's not much of a burden for the board, either. A specialist manufacturer is helpful in design and handles all details.

The tie is not a cost. It's a self-liquidating, declining balance investment that may even show a small profit. The club can inaugurate a new tie for as little front money as \$900 . . . no more than many members lay out for the family armamentarium of woods, irons and bags. As few as 150 ties can be ordered at one time.

There are many possibilities for working the club crest, initials or "logo" into a handsome tie, according to David Wessel of Wm. Chelsea Ltd., Scarsdale, N.Y. The firm offers an "idea kit" of design suggestions. These include close or wide repeats of the emblem alone, placing the emblems between or on stripes, arranging the emblem to form stripes, or creating overall patterns.

Since many colors can be woven into one tie, intricate crests or logos can be reproduced. You might split an order to give two or more different field colors.

What device to use? Most clubs already have a good crest or device. Something can always be found . . . a symbol of name or location, a landmark, a bit of architecture, cursive initials. Things like crossed golf sticks should be handled carefully to keep them from looking like ordinary store-bought golf ties.

If you already have a club tie, but it isn't being worn, something's wrong with it. If it's too narrow, or

isn't the quality members want, better just write it off and put it out of sight. Start fresh with a new tie.

A well known club near New York City did just this and increased tie sales 300 percent. The detail was noticeably finer, the colors subtly richer, and it had a more luxurious hand, neater knot and drape.

Two things besides good design encourage circulation of your tie: reasonable price, and consistent publicity. The cost to the club of an exclusive design is usually less than equivalent ties in leading stores. This gives room for a mark-up to cover costs of publicity, order handling, and even a few ties as V.I.P. gifts.

Successful methods for promoting sales, in addition to pro-shop merchandising include:

- Displays at activity centers: Front desk, bars, bowling alley, pool, etc.
- Club newsletter. Announce, and follow up with timely gift suggestions.
- Poster cards at counters, bulletin boards.
- Table tents for dining rooms, grills.

Mail orders can be handled with ease. Work up a simple envelope stuffer/order blank picturing the tie, to insert with bills, particularly before Christmas and Father's Day.

So you're going to choose a tie. Allow plenty of time for a good job. Your committee needs time to consider many options in design, color, materials, and policies. Meticulous weaving takes time. And your members want nothing but the best. □