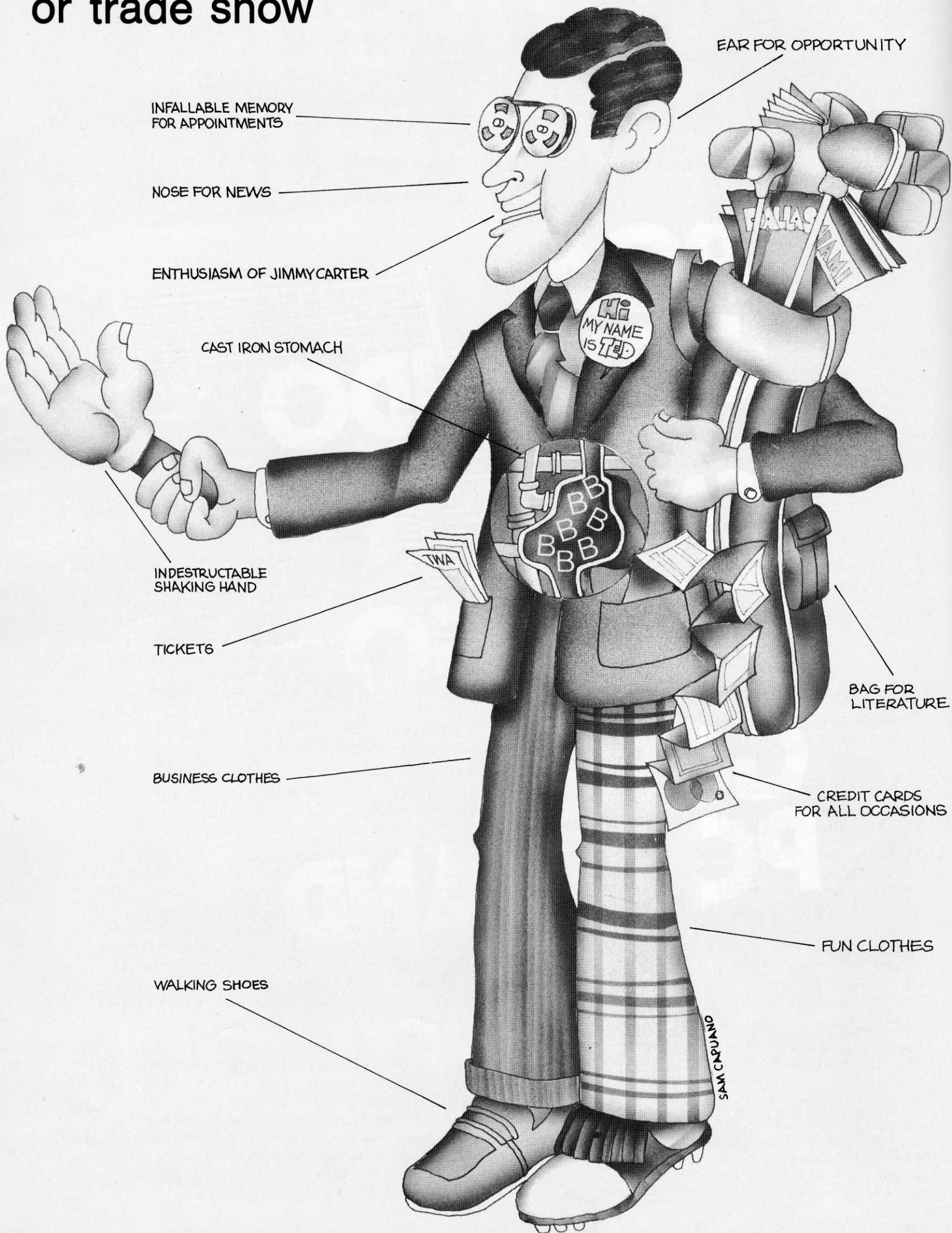


How to get the most out of your convention or trade show



by Joseph Arkin, C.P.A.

According to some educated estimates, some 20-30 million Americans will attend more than 100,000 conventions and trade shows throughout the nation during the coming year — including the several thousand golf businessmen who will travel to Orlando, Chicago, and Portland this month and next for the PGA Merchandise Show, CMAA 50th Annual Meeting, and GCSAA Turfgrass Conference and Show. Many of those attending will come home delighted with the new ideas they've learned, the contacts they made, and the sightseeing they did. Others may be disappointed, because they didn't know how to prevent what should have been a pleasant trip from becoming a trap.

Next time you attend a convention or trade show — whether it's one of the three covered in GOLF BUSINESS this month or not, whether it's your first such trip or your fifteenth — you may get more out of the whole experience by following this simple list of DO's and DON'T's:

DO figure out your travel budget well in advance. According to hotel spokesmen, the average attendee spends about \$50 per day. Survey figures show that hotel/motel accommodations account for approximately 40 percent of this total, shopping in retail stores takes 15 percent, and sightseeing another 25 percent. The tab for food, entertainment, and sundry expenses eats up the remaining 20 percent.

DON'T take along too much cash. For safety's sake, take along a minimum amount of cash, plus some traveler's checks and nationally known credit cards.

DON'T be haphazard about travel arrangements. Check on timetables; buy plane tickets well in advance. If you are traveling by car, don't make the mistake of shopping for sleeping accommodations when you arrive — at the convention or at stops along the way. Most hotel/motel chains have toll-free telephone numbers and computerized services to take care of your stay at the convention site or on the road. And they will make arrangements for your side trips, too.

A little foresight can net you accommodations with all of the comforts of home: amenities such as laundry and valet service, beauty and barber shops, even babysitters on call.

DO submit your ideas in advance to those planning the convention or trade show. Tell them about the problems you'd like discussed, the kind of speakers you want to hear, the programs you'd find most worthwhile. If you have opinions about where meetings and social functions should be held, mention that too. You will probably find that those in charge of programming will welcome your suggestions — if not for this year, then for next.

DON'T neglect your convention "homework." Examine the program carefully; schedule your time to cover the discussions, speeches, and guided tours that interest you the most. Put down on paper just what you want to achieve at various sessions.

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Take the trouble to take notes and ask for literature of exhibitors, and don't be bashful about asking for copies of speeches.

DO participate as fully as you can. Join the discussions which may follow the speech-making; steer the talk to the particular phase of the matter that's most important to you and your club or course. If there is no discussion or question period, try what some experts call "mental participation": as the speaker talks, try to apply what he says to your situation. Mentally challenge his observations; note points you want to discuss with him or with members of the audience later. See how the audience reacts to his statements; it's one of those meaningful little details that don't show up in transcripts of speeches.

DON'T shirk the purpose of the convention or trade show. Be conscientious about business sessions. Don't duck committee assignments, especially those which will continue after the convention itself has ended. And don't be shy about volunteering for these special assignments. They offer a chance to pick up extra information and experience, widen your circle of acquaintances and contacts — and earn more recognition for yourself.

DO be sure you are comfortably and appropriately dressed for all sessions; it will add to your self-confidence, help you make a better impression. A basic wardrobe for the well-dressed male can consist of one suit, two pairs of slacks, one sport coat, and (optionally) a dinner jacket. A change of ties or slacks can make the same outfit look different on two successive days, particularly if the suit or jacket is conservative enough not to scream for attention.

DON'T forget to plan a pleasant side trip if you are bringing along your spouse and children. Check with any major oil company for advice on planning excursions by car in and around the convention area. If you want, your hotel/motel staff representatives will help you make arrangements. Plan rest periods to punctuate your family's sightseeing and shopping sprees; take advantage of hotel/motel swimming pools and other recreational facilities.

DO seize the chance to talk shop with conventioners outside your specialty. The perspectives and small talk you hear may help you to do your own job better.

DO make sure you register and get your official credentials. Sign in at every lecture and seminar where necessary and possible. Keep an exact record of your expenses and give these to your accountant. Even with changing regulations and crackdowns on convention and trade show expenses, there will still be many legitimate tax deductions to which you are entitled — resulting in possible substantial tax savings even if you took your spouse and children along and even if part of the time was spent on sightseeing.

DON'T fail to follow through. Remember that the job isn't done when you leave the convention or trade show. Turn the notes you took into a report for your associates at your club or course. Summarize what happened and what you learned. Most important of all: these should include the new ideas you picked up, new products you saw, and how these ideas and products could be used at your golf facility. □