

FOR PRO SHOP PROFITS

Take a swing at softgoods merchandising

by Bill Mallon

Why should I merchandise? This question has been asked many times, and there are many answers. The most important is a potential net profit of from \$2,000 to \$10,000 in sales which goes into your pocket. That means you can decide how much you want to make and buy accordingly. This is based on average net profit figures.

Now before you invest your life savings, we should investigate what success factors are involved. The first thing is to have a thorough understanding of why we can and should be successful.

Every member at your club is good for the purchase of 2-4 pairs of street shoes, 1-3 pairs of golf shoes, 6-18 pairs of socks and underwear, 4-12 pairs of slacks, 6-20 shirts, 2-10 ties, 1-5 sportcoats, 1-2 jackets, and 1-4 belts each and every year. Why shouldn't he buy these from you? All you have to do is give him the opportunity and the reason. You have many advantages over the stores where he is buying these things now.

The biggest advantage you have is convenience. Nobody likes to go out of their way. The success of shopping malls around the country is proof of this. The malls are closer to where people live and provide one-stop shopping. They stepped into people's traffic pattern. You as a pro are already in that traffic pattern and can provide one-stop shopping. You don't even have to pay rent or advertising.

The second advantage is knowing and greeting your members by name. People like to deal with people they know. All the best stores try to get to know and develop their best customers. The golf pro has a license and the personality and expertise to steal this business. All you must do is see this opportunity.

The third success factor, and all the best merchants really exploit this area, is promotion of golf through



tournaments. The more credit on the books, the more you are guaranteed in sales. So start expanding your tournament schedule. Also you can increase traffic by extending your season through a 'Frostbite Tournament' to start the year. This should be scheduled for February or March. Many will be snowed out, but it starts everyone thinking golf. At the end of the season two or three various tournaments, especially prestigious or big prize tournaments, will keep people playing and practicing. These extensions to your regular season are sure to increase sweater, windbreaker, and rainsuit sales.

Another way of bringing business into your shop is knowing birthdays and anniversaries. Any time a member mentions one of these dates, you or someone on your staff should mark it down in a book near the register. The same thing should be done with sizes. What an advantage to be able to suggest something a week or two in advance. You will bet that customer every year because you took advantage of the opportunity. Every year this list should grow.

Promotional plans such as Christmas parties or a holiday event add to your sales. In major cities many golf pros take advantage of football by carrying team colors and items to keep warm. Many clubs have chartered buses going to the games. Someone always forgets a hat or is not prepared for sudden changes in the weather. It does not take much effort to take advantage of this extra traffic flowing through your club.

One area where you have absolutely no competition is in crested items. Everyone who joins a club wants to brag he is a member of such and such a club. The pro only has to do two things. The first is to have a club and programs to be proud of. The second is to have a good crest. Gener-

ally the less complicated crests are the best sellers. Sales can be boosted simply by changing location of the crest on the garment or colors in the crest. Guests also like to brag where they have been. What better way than a crested item?

By now you can see that merchandising has unlimited possibilities. It does require a sense of timing and, like your golf game, one receives only the benefits one has worked to produce. The pro today has only to look around and see how some of his friends are doing. Copy the best swing in your area, not the hacker.

There are other reasons to merchandise. One is energy conservation. The older you get, the less energy you have. It's easy to give 10 or 15 lessons a day while you are young. But with age it's much easier to sell a couple of golf outfits and put the same profit in your pocket.

The golf pro today must be well-rounded. He no longer can survive by being just a teacher and public relations man. Today merchandising is part of the profession. It can mean the difference between just making a living and enjoying a large increase in income. Many pros today depend on shop sales as their main source of income. Both you and the club benefit. The day has arrived when clubs expect their pros to be good merchandisers. It's just part of the job.

Luckily, the majority today have seen the writing on the wall and have prepared themselves and their assistants to be extremely well-rounded. These pros are the heart of the golf business. The pro who constantly adjusts with the times and continues to educate himself is the pro who is getting the best job and making the best living. This man who sees opportunity and goes after it is the pro of tomorrow. He knows why and how to merchandise. □

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