

Pro Profits as Merchant

As told to A. Earle Schlaw by
DAVE LIVIE

Professional, Shaker Heights Country Club

GOLF professionals have a tendency to slight the merchandising end of their profession due in most instances to slow returns, a heavy playing or instruction schedule, or the feeling that too much attention paid to the shop and store has a tendency to encourage animosity on the part of the members toward what they consider the professional's sideline.

The latter instance can be easily dismissed for the professional in this case is too conscientious and in time will realize that his store and its upkeep is as much a part of his value to the club as is his teaching. His receipts should be a clear indication as to what the members think of his so-called sideline.

Playing professionals or professionals with a heavy instruction schedule cannot possibly give a great deal of time to merchandising their stock but by carrying a complete line of golfers' supplies and placing their store in competent hands, this obstacle can be overcome. If thought reveals that the returns are slow for the amount of stock carried, then certain progressive merchandising methods must be brought into play or this revenue obtained by close application to another branch of the profession.

The methods I have used to successfully build up my merchandise sales I would not view as much from a progressive angle as a common sense angle. I say common sense angle because any professional since the game started who successfully retailed golf supplies used the same methods and they are only progressive in that they are up-to-date.

Four cardinal points in regard to sales which if observed by the professional will increase his returns on stock 10 to 30 per cent, in the order of their importance, are:

Personal service.

Complete stock of high grade golf supplies.



DAVE LIVIE

Proper display.
Neatness.

Personal Service Foremost

Personal service is the greatest selling point a professional has at his command. He expects to give it to dispose of his stock and the members of his club expect it from him. Many a time I have found that this service is slow pay but in time it starts to pay dividends in roundabout and unexpected ways and as long as there is that possibility, the professional should al-

ways be ready to give it.

The first service of every professional in connection with the disposal of his merchandise is to show every member of the club he comes in contact with that he is interested in seeing that he or she gets the right kind of service in selecting clubs. This being done to discourage buying in downtown department stores which in most cases fail to consider the purchaser except from a sales angle. The professional takes build and style of play into consideration and tries to sell a club that fits the member as neatly as a proper sized glove.

With the right service in clubs will come the increased sale in other supplies which should in their disposal carry the same assurance of personal service. To carry through this idea I have sometimes found it necessary to stretch a point in order to send the customer out of the shop satisfied. To illustrate this point:

A member came to me with a broken steel shafted driver and asked if I could fix the shaft. Knowing he had bought it at a downtown store I told him to take it to them and they would send it away for him and if they didn't to bring it back to me. Because he had bought it on sale, they refused to repair it and so he returned to me. I shipped it to the company, explained the situation, and they gladly repaired it without charge. That man has always been one of my best customers.

Of course that is only one of the many bits of personal service which are done merely for the sake of goodwill and then there are the many others done for business reasons whereby you replace purchased articles or refund money to satisfy a whim, when you know the purchased goods were all you implied at the time of sale. All this to keep peace in the family and maintain the standard of your merchandise.

Careful Buying Important

In your complete stock of high grade golf supplies you set your standard and the professional who handles only the best in clubs, bags, hats, caps, knickers, shoes, etc., has a big jump on his competitor who doesn't, even if it is only in the matter of pride. His stock is classy and backed by good national and sectional advertising and consists of everything the golfer needs with especial appeal to the business man, who has no time to fool around a department store waiting for a clerk, when he knows he can purchase the desired article at the first tee in about one-tenth the time.

I have always found the golfing public gullible to a certain extent in the matter of purchasing golfing accessories, especially clubs. This is a fault of theirs that can act as a sort of boomerang to the professional if he does not sell with the idea of further sales in mind. Of course as the game gets older the buying public becomes better acquainted with the sport and the accessories needed to play it but then they are always willing to take a professional's word in preference to their own decision in the matter. Because of this fact the professional can violate the confidence of his members by selling with no thought of future sales in mind and with a total disregard as to whether the goods are going to satisfy the purchaser.

For my part I would rather sacrifice a sale any time than make one that might in time have a tendency to reflect on my character through my methods of merchandising. I carry a guaranteed line and I manage to guarantee satisfaction in them by conscientious selling and a personal interest in their use after the sale. By doing this I encourage mouth to mouth advertising which sends a prospective buyer into my shop sold on my merchandise before he ever enters the door. This gives my stock the prestige that permits me to charge standard and top prices on any articles therein. It behooves every professional to

sell with his eye on the future, satisfying every customer if possible and not only that but making them in turn a booster by the treatment accorded them in the transaction of the sale.

When visiting club members happen to play at the club I am affiliated with, they step in to look over the stock and that, in most cases, means business. When this happens they invariably show newly bought clubs or ask opinions as to whether they need others to better their game. These opinions, I give, showing whatever interest I can, but never criticizing clubs bought from a brother professional. If I thought them unsuited in some way for their style of play I would change them so that they would be right rather than have them think I was trying to force a new set of clubs on them. It is just a matter of diplomacy and up to the professional to use it if he is to further his own interests.

Study Your Displays

Proper display in merchandising golf stock is a big asset to the professional. Some might lack the space and others the taste to cash in on it but it is a requisite in more ways than one. Balls and smaller accessories must be displayed with prices where they can be easily dispensed without needless questioning. Clubs and bags should be on racks and shelves where the prospective buyer can have close inspection without unnecessary delay.

Then you come to the part that window display plays in acquainting members with your stock and the part a frequently and well dressed window can play in your bank account. I have seen this worked time and again and will cite one instance wherein I had a part.

A number of years ago I was hired by a California club as a teaching pro during the winter months. The club professional was very busy and paid little or no attention to his store probably because he figured the returns too small to be bothered with, but he did have in his store a nice display window facing the first tee, which by the way is the ideal location. In this he had tossed all of his discarded golf ball boxes which never got a glance from a passing member but what he or she contemplated on what a lovely bonfire they would make.

At certain times when I was at leisure I would glance at this window and it became such an eyesore, I asked the professional if he would mind if I dressed it and re-

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arranged his store. He gave me permission and I went to work and dressed his window with the snappiest golf togs and clubs he had. The effect was immediate. The bulk of the members were wealthy Easterners who came West with the idea of buying golfing supplies suitable to the climate and they started to buy at the club shop. The window did the talking for the summer and the receipts took all of a 30 per cent jump and maintained it for the season.

A good display not only informs the members what you handle but it suggests some other article they might need and they are never adverse to stepping in the store and inquiring. And when they are sometimes in too much of a hurry to stop before play a momentary glance at the window makes an impression that will sometimes bring them in after they finish their game. All in all, at no cost, the professional is able to keep his members informed as to their needs through the medium of the window display.

Then into merchandising comes personality. Any professional can sell his game or his teaching ability to a club but they both count for but little in the merchandising end if his personality is not pleasing. Evidence of this will be easily shown in his personal service to members but further accentuated by personal appearance and the neatness of his shop.

That is why I stress neatness in person and carry through the same idea in regard to shop and display of merchandise. Show me a slovenly dressed professional and I'll show you a shop similarly dressed.

To successfully retail golf stock the professional must make the store a large part of his value to the club and be proud of the fact. In some ways it becomes a vital part of his position for it offers a close contact with members which could not be obtained otherwise and gives them an insight as to what manner of man you are. If your dealings with them are honest, you get good honest returns. If you are considerate, they are considerate of you and your business does not suffer because of it and so on down the line. The golfing public is a big market. A professional can either consider his store a thing separate from himself or a sideline and disregard the opportunity it offers or as the wide awake pros of today are doing—get into the harness and with good common sense ideas in merchandising get the revenue that is waiting for them in this branch of the profession.