



LEWIS MYERS

Don't Brood Over Store Competition —FIGHT IT!

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IF YOU HAD a store without competition until one day a stranger opened up across the street from you and started to undersell you, what would you do? Sit behind the counter and say to yourself and a few of your continued customers: "It's not right! It can't last! That fellow's taking away my business. He advertises. He even undersells me. What shall I do?"

If you were out in a boat and fell overboard, what would you do? Brother, you'd use your energy swimming to safety. That's just what you have to do if competition shoves you into any place where the going is rough. Paddling for yourself gets you somewhere safely. Spend your time crying and you go down without anyone paying attention as the third set of bubbles comes up over you.

A fee-course pro is supposed to be more seriously effected by store competition than a private course pro, but that supposition is baloney. It all depends on the pro, no matter what the character of play is at the course.

When I was pro at a certain course a buyer for one of the big local department stores bought up a lot of golf balls at a low price. About that time the manufacturer of this ball called up all the pros in the district, informing the pros that this ball the department store had bought was being discontinued. Pros were given the preference in buying these balls. Well, the department manager at the store got a list of the members of my club and sent each member the number of balls he thought the member could use. The balls were charged to those having charge accounts. To others the balls were sent C. O. D. Having been on the alert for some fast work by store competitors, I placed that brand of balls in prominence on my display case together with a sign to the effect that I would not be under-

sold. This sign had a price under-selling the store 10 cents a dozen. Furthermore I called up the manufacturer, told him what I was doing and received 100 per cent cooperation backing me in my position. He told me to go the limit.

Members Get a Shock.

When the members of the club who had received these store balls came out and saw that I had the ball for less than they paid the store, they laughed somewhat sourly and considered rightly that they had been stung for straying away from the pro shop. Many of them returned the balls to the store and bought from me. I sold a lot more balls than I ordinarily would have sold, thanks to the store stirring things up. My net profit was about so much velvet as the volume was unexpected.

Now the reason for telling that tale is not to show you what a brainy guy I think I am, but merely to point out a moral: *When you have your back against the wall, there is only one way out—advance and beat your competitor at his own game!*

If you are not as smart as your competitor, then you had better not call attention to it by whining or he will see that you are soft picking and pick on you plenty. I deeply believe that if the pros all smart up together and work together on this merchandising there is no reason why they, in their superior sales locations, can't sell at least 75 per cent of all the golf merchandise sold in the United States. Man for man, pros are better golf goods merchants than you will find at any other retail establishments, but pros are cursed with a tendency to sob instead of sweating and selling.

Burning the Devil With Fire.

Let me tell you of another case. A certain manufacturer got the endorsement of

a large number of pros in running a sale of discontinued merchandise. When the ad was inserted in the paper a few days later, I visited the store where the sale was being held and in accordance with arrangements made by the manufacturer, I bought out most of the merchandise, leaving only odds and ends at the store.

Then the store manager had to inform his would-be customers that the good merchandise they were seeking was in my shop. This brought me more friends and customers who got the right idea that I was a better bet than the store for real bargains.

Usually the way these sales work out is that the pros let their names be used but fail to corner the greater part of the stock and put on some personal selling effort, so the store cashes in on the pro endorsement of the sale. The pro signs something and sits back hoping the business will roll in. Life isn't that way, comrade. You've got to go out and collect. No one ever won the National Open parking around the locker-room.

When I hear how other retailers suffered in 1933 I begin to think that the pro business to a real business man, isn't at all bad. Before I ever opened my shop door in 1933 I had the plan of operations figured out pretty well in detail and based my scheme on the following general policies:

Make sales on expert service and intimate, frequent personal contact. No store can match my line-up in this respect.

You can't expect to sell what you haven't got.

Stores advertise and use leaders to draw customers; so must I.

A pro away from his club when play is heavy can't expect players who are more or less strangers to him to buy from him. Most humans are from Missouri. They have to be hauled in and shown.

A pro has to sell himself before he can sell merchandise. Confidence in the seller is $\frac{3}{4}$ of every sale.

Put merchandise where it can be seen and handled. The time to make a sale is when the prospect is interested.

All merchandise is priced and a sales reason for it given. Buyers have to be told why one ball or club sells for more than another.

High pressure is not a necessity. It is the bunk. All you want them to buy is what they need. But a lot of times they

don't realize they need it. You'll never build up confidence and good-will that make steady customers by strong-arming or annoying people into buying.

Use plenty of signs. Change them often. Have them tell the story. See that some of them are on the first tee by the starter as well as in the shop.

I won't cut the price of any article on which the manufacturer maintains the price at other retail outlets. I make it plain and persistent to my customers that I will meet or under-sell the price of any cut-rate store on the same type of merchandise sold by the store. If the manufacturer won't supply me at a price that will enable me to meet the price, I never have any difficulty in getting the same type of merchandise as good—or better—from another standard manufacturer. Because I know golf goods better than any store clerk, the golf players have more confidence in my merchandise and buy it in preference to the store cut-price merchandise. The result is that the manufacturer defeats his object of healthy sales by not making me a proposition equal to that made the store.

Lack of Objective Is Costly.

A pro who thinks he can be a Hagen or a Sarazen, play a lot of golf and at the same time run a golf shop at his club in first-class, profitable fashion, is making a sad mistake. He'd better make up his mind what he wants to do. If he wants to be a playing star, he had better get some smart associate running his shop on a basis that will give the assistant plenty of leeway for making a good living, or get back to the shop and teaching himself.

Many a manufacturer is holding the bag on some boy who has practically ruined his career by not keeping his playing and shop service activities in proper balance. All you have to do is to add up the dough made net by fellows doing a good job at their own clubs and compare it with the net income of the star players to see that the rewards of watching and working your job at the club are much more substantial and certain than the gold at the end of the rainbow which lures the playing stars.

Figure yourself as a hard-working business man in a job so tough that you've got to stay on it thinking and working all the time, instead of going overboard for that idea of the pro being entitled to be the dressed-up pampered pet of providence, and the pro job runs smoother.