

Harry Bassler's "7 Success Steps" Mean 50Gs A Year

By JOE McDONALD

To do a business of over \$50,000 a year for the past 5 years a pro must have "something."

A quarter-million dollars worth of business transacted during the "war years" (1941-1945) with their shortage of clubs and balls! And this, mind you, does not include any teaching fees for 4 of the 5 years, as the pro could not take the time out to teach.

Who's the pro? Where is he located? How did he do it?

The answers to the first 2 questions are easy.

The pro is Harry Bassler. Location: Fox Hills-Baldwin golf courses, Culver City, Calif., about 10 miles from downtown Los Angeles. (Two 18-hole daily fee courses adjacent to each other.)

Answering the third question of "How did he do it?" will constitute the balance of this article.

We'll try to explain Bassler's success formula. Maybe other pros, particularly public course pros, will find some ideas herein which they might be able to apply to their pro shop business.

Bassler's Business Rules

Bassler's cardinal rules for successful shop operation and merchandising for any type of golf course are:

1. See that location of your golf shop demands that all players must pass through it to get to the first tee.
2. Have a display of ALL leading manufacturers clubs, bags, balls and other supplies.
3. Use various "eye-catchers" scattered throughout your shop that will make most of the golfers "stop to look."
4. Always be in your shop from at least 1:00 P.M. until closing—there are 5 times more clubs sold in the after-



Harry Bassler, a star at scoring with the sales slips as well as with the clubs.

5. Use and wear the latest in golfing equipment and apparel for yourself and staff.
6. Keep your assistants thoroughly informed of costs and operating expenses so they learn that an article selling for \$30 and which cost \$20 does NOT mean \$10 profit.
7. The pro should DO, and be willing to do from time to time, any job in the shop that he asks his assistants to do—which includes cleaning up and sweeping out.

There it is. Looks like 7 simple steps, doesn't it? Maybe you'll claim you are already performing most of them.

But, we'll tip you off.

Shop Location Success Key

The "key" step is that No. 1 step!

LOCATION OF YOUR GOLF SHOP.



Harry Bassler and his staff of golf "merchandisers": Left to right—Bassler, Dick Boggs, Bill Martin and Ed Schwerin. Observe the neat display of items in showcase.

—Photo Waldo Glover & Associates

The other steps can be followed quite easily, we believe. But, in our estimation, that No. 1 step is the step YOU want to see put into effect at YOUR course in order to do a volume business. From there on if you are a hustler, a good merchandiser, a good teaching pro, a good playing pro, you might do over \$50,000 a year business as Bassler does!

At too many daily fee and municipal golf courses (and private clubs too) the pro's shop looks like some old room or building they didn't know what else to use the darn thing for, and in most cases is "located" anywhere from 50 yards to 100 yards away from the clubhouse and first tee. Sometimes down a hill (which customers do not want to climb) or off on the side partially hidden by a clump of trees "under which you can teach privately, in quiet."

In many instances, the pro shop is merely a section of the main clubhouse, or the "dining room" where the golfers come to buy their sandwiches, coffee or pop beverages—but located so that the golfers do not have to pass the pro's display, nor do they have to meet him, in any way, before going to the first tee.

Such golf shop layouts and locations, Bassler says, are strictly "negative" as far as helping the golfers see, and be in the position of buying, balls, clubs and accessories that will further their enjoyment of the game, bring them back for additional

rounds—and help the pro increase his sales.

Too often such locations and layouts of golf shops do not allow space for the carrying of sufficient stock, or display to catch the eyes of the golfers—thus presenting to the pro the minimum of sales and service opportunities. In such a position the pro is up against it right from the start.

Increase Golfers' Traffic

Bassler insists you MUST arrange that 100% of the golfers at your course MUST walk right through the middle of your shop if you ever hope to get their business, or the majority of their business. YOU MUST INCREASE THE TRAFFIC OF GOLFERS THROUGH YOUR SHOP AND THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO DO IT.

If the golfers do not have to come into your shop, they won't. And sales will always be at a low ebb. At private clubs, the members, in many instances, usually phone the pro shop and say, "Send a caddie with my clubs and a couple of balls to the first tee, please." And that's the extent to which the pro "contacted" that customer that day! What a fine chance he had to sell or serve that golfer!

Bassler came to the realization of this situation after locations at both private and public courses and at every opportunity "fought" for a location nearer the first tee, or the handling of starting tees or cards, so that the rendering of these services would bring the golfers into his shop.

In every instance where he was given such privileges his business increased immediately.

Boss Realizes Pro Shop Value

So, when he came over to his present location at Fox Hills-Baldwin golf courses, the first deal he made with Al Bryant, the manager, was that his shop would be (a) big enough to allow him to carry a large enough stock to properly serve the courses' customers, and (b) that the pro shop would be located so that every player approaching the first tee would have to walk through the pro shop.

Al Bryant, the course owner and manager, gladly conceded this to Bassler, as Bryant himself was anxious to have a well-stocked, modern golf shop on his properties to serve his many customers, along with a qualified pro who could help the customers select the proper equipment and clubs suited to their play; keep them happier about their game, and keep them playing.

And, put up fences and hedges Bassler did!

At Fox Hills and Baldwin courses you cannot get to the first tee without passing through the pro shop. The trees, fences, hedges and paths all lead to the pro shop—and through it—if you want to get to

the first tee and beginning of the play.

Well, pros, there's Step No. 1 to big business.

Can you accomplish it at your course?

Have Full Display

Step No. 2. Have a display of all leading manufacturers' clubs, bags, balls and other supplies.

Bassler claims that too many pros allow sentiment or other partiality to one manufacturer (usually the maker of the clubs the pro uses himself) to sway him into carrying unbalanced stock of one "pet" brand. Such pros stock up on only two or three leading brands and are then placed in a position where they are trying to "force" their customers to buy their "pet" brand of goods.

This is an unbusinesslike policy, Bassler contends, and has lost more sales in a pro shop than any other reason. He counters with the suggestion that the pro stock at least 3 to 5 sets of all top-flight club makers. From these sets the pro can take orders for special, or other sets, not then in stock. In this manner the pro is giving the customer what he wants, which is a more "positive" action and more likely to lead to sales.

Bassler also points out that the "right



Part of the club and bag display at Fox Hills-Baldwin golf courses pro shop. Assistant Dick Boggs is near that "Bargain Barrel" which is shifted around two and three times daily.

—Photo Waldo Glover & Associates

answers to the customers' questions" make or lose the sale. Example: A golfer enters the shop and asks if he can buy a set of clubs of a brand which the shop is temporarily out of, or does not carry. After a talk it is agreed that the pro is to order this special set from the factory.

At this point Mr. Customer asks the pro: "When will I get delivery of these clubs?" And, it is at this point, Bassler says, that most pros fall down. Usually the pro starts to "think out loud" by enumerating the number of days to get the order to the factory, and for the factory to get the clubs to the pro. Then, after doing this simple arithmetic, the pro announces the clubs will be back by a certain date; generally two weeks later.

Then, much to the dismay of the pro, the customer says: "Well, let it go. I wanted these clubs to be able to play with them next Tuesday with my boss at the Swanky CC (or some special tournament) where he has invited me to play. But, since they won't arrive by then, let it go."

A lost sale.

The Right Answer

Bassler says the pro's answer when the customer asked, "When will I get these clubs?" should have been, "When do you want them Mr. Customer?" Then the reply of the customer immediately lets the pro know if he could order of the factory and get them back in time. If not, then Bassler's policy is to offer the customer Bassler's own personal set of clubs for use until the factory set arrives. The pro's clubs are usually the latest and most beautiful in design and appearance and the customer can only be flattered by such an offer; usually is, and meanwhile gives the order for the set to come from the factory at a later date.

Bassler's hint in stocking up is to buy as many different brands of clubs as you can afford; have as wide a variety of brands as you can. Bassler's current inventory shows over 150 varieties of clubs, balls, bags, shoes, wearing apparel and accessories valued at no less than \$10,000.

Step No. 3. Use various "eye-catchers" scattered throughout the shop that will make many golfers "stop to look."

A simple example: Ask for, or buy from your local newspaperman or photographer some 8x10 inch glossy prints of top-flight golfers and tournament winners in your area, and of some of the nationally known players.

Frame these and put them on your shop walls.

Conversation Openers

Bassler is willing to bet that the first

day these pictures are put up many, many golfers will stop to look at them and gab with you about them. And, before you know it, they are talking a little "golf," getting better acquainted and looking at your supplies displayed nearby.

Out of the hundreds of golfers who stop to look at your pictures and talk with you about them many will start discussing their own game that will lead into buying new clubs, simply because you "gave them the opportunity."

Bassler has framed photos of golfers stuck up all over his shop. To date he must have spent over \$250 for such pictures and he claims they never fail to stop the first-timer visiting his shop.

There are other "eye-catchers" you can employ, but let's see you start with this one.

Sells to the "Unsatisfied"

Step No. 4: Always be in your shop from at least 1:00 P.M. to closing as there are 5 times as many clubs sold after 1:00 P.M. than in the morning.

The basic psychological reason for this, according to Bassler, is that the golfer, having finished his round, is not satisfied with his game that day. He never is, don't you know? And, right there in the shop, moving around, is Bassler when the golfer comes in from the 18th green.

His "opener" for conversation—a perfectly normal and proper one—is, "Well, how was your game today?"

That's all the golfer needs to "open up," and usually complain. Generally the golfer puts the blame on his clubs—an easy "out" for him—and it is quite likely that Bassler will agree with him.

Then tactfully, the golfer is shown a newer, finer club; asked to "feel" it out, and the sale is in the making. The golfer's clubs are looked over, and if not bought from Bassler originally, several reasons may be immediately apparent why the golfer isn't getting his best from them.

But, getting back to the psychological reason and best time of the day to sell a golfer. It is not when he appears at the course to start play. He has usually pepped himself up mentally to think that "today is the day I'm going to bust 90," and is in a frame of mind "to prove it."

After finishing his round, much to his disappointment, then he enters his "weakest sales resistance period"; is willing to listen to **any** suggestion to improve his game—lessons, new clubs or some helpful suggestions.

Moral: Be circulating around your shop

afternoons; meet the players coming in; discuss their games. Watch the sales grow!

Pro Is A Showcase

Step No. 5: Use and wear the latest in golfing equipment and wearing apparel for yourself and staff.

If the pro, and his assistants, wear old-fashioned, shabby, unclean shirts, slacks and shoes, and play with an unmatched, out-of-date collection of clubs carried in a battle-scarred bag, aren't they encouraging the golfer to do likewise?

On the other hand, when the pro is playing with members, and appears in neatly shod, comfortable shoes of latest make, well designed, up-to-date shirts and slacks and uses his most beautiful set of matched clubs, along with all the proper accessories such as golf glove, tees, ballwiper, club covers, etc., isn't he setting a good example? Isn't it quite logical for the golfer to assume that such things are necessary to a good game?

Most certainly if the pro and his assistants do not appear with correct and complete dress and equipment most of his

customers will not feel they should—and there goes some more lost sales.

Inform Assistants

Step No. 6: Keep your assistants thoroughly informed as to costs of merchandise and services you buy.

Here, in relation to assistant pros, who represent you when you are out of the shop (which can be quite often) some pros are reluctant to confide in their assistants as to costs, volume, overhead, profits. Some pros feel that is letting out "private business secrets" which are strictly his "personal" business.

However, keeping your assistants ignorant of such important factors of your business, is a poor policy, Bassler thinks.

Bassler trusts his assistants implicitly and therefore as part of their business and merchandising training in his shop he shows them every invoice as received from the factory, then shows them how he sets the selling price, and finally shows them an itemized statement of his overhead—payroll, insurance premiums, telephone bills, invoices, etc. He shows them what it costs to operate his shop weekly, monthly.

He asks that such information be kept confidential. And it is.



View of right end of Bassler's pro shop (from entrance) with well-stocked and well-displayed clubs, wearing apparel and accessories. Every golfer playing the Fox Hills-Baldwin courses must tread that mat you see running through the middle of the shop. Exit to starting tees is on extreme left; entrance to shop from clubhouse on extreme right. Note the "eye-catcher" photos on walls.

—Photo Waldo Glover & Associates



Exterior of pro shop at Fox Hills-Baldwin courses. Notice that the path coming from the clubhouse leads to and through the pro shop on the other side of which are the starting tees.

—Photo Waldo Glover & Associates

After such frankness on the part of the "boss pro" the assistant can only feel that he is a "part" of the business, completely trusted and evidently considered capable of acting with authority for the pro without the necessity of running to him for advice on every sale.

Trade-ins Make Profits

In connection with trade-ins this proves very valuable. Knowing all the factors of costs and overhead involved, including the possible re-sale price of the trade-ins, the assistant pro can make an offer to the golfer right on the spot. He doesn't have to try to "stall" the customer "until the pro comes back" or "until I see Mr. Pro." That interval of time has also cost too many lost sales.

Bassler counsels that such frankness with your assistants removes the thought from their minds that "everything is sold at 100% profit." They soon find out there is much overhead that has to be deducted before you can start making profit. And they act accordingly and become better sales people.

Bassler also earnestly recommends that every pro hire a certified public accountant (CPA) to audit his books monthly and annually, make out all government forms re social security, sales and income taxes, for in no other way can you know exactly where your business (and money) is going. He also urges discounting your bills every month thus saving 24% per year on billings (12% now that the discount rate from fac-

tories has been reduced). Bassler explains that it was his prompt discounting of bills prior to the war that secured him sufficient supplies all during the "war years" when there were shortages.

Step No. 7: The pro should do, and be willing to do, any job at any time, that he asks his assistants to do.

And, Bassler cries out to prove he's not kidding: "That includes sweeping out the shop."

Immaculate Shop Always

Now, brother pros, that last mentioned little item of sweeping out and cleaning up the shop, is a very, very important matter, says Bassler.

Your shop can't look good enough, can it?

Your shop is always clean and inviting, isn't it?

Or is it?

"Once a day" or "morning and night" cleaning isn't enough. Bassler speaking.

Throughout the day, most days, you may have to clean up the place several times. Old papers and wrappers, discarded score-cards, busted tees, club wrappers, dirt and dust should never be allowed to stay on the floor, show cases and displayed items. Not for more than an hour anyway, Bassler insists.

And, if the assistants or shop boy are busy at the moment Bassler discovers the

(Continued on page 65)

the club joining the Western GA to make caddie scholarships available and the annual Caddies vs. Members softball game.

Chicago and suburban newspapers were kept supplied with information on the campaign and they gave it a good play.

HARRY BASSLER

(Continued from page 34)

dirt and papers, why Bassler grabs the broom and takes care of the job then. Strange as it seems, Bassler says, after the assistants see you sweeping and cleaning up, you will never have to ask them to do it.

But, best of all it gives you another chance to "shift around" your stock—which gives the appearance that you had to do so because you "sold out," or nearly sold out, the items previously displayed at certain spots. Bassler urges this. Keep shifting your displays; it looks like you are doing a bigger business. Do not let your displays "get in a rut" and have the same things in the same spot all the time. All smart "merchandisers" employ this good trick.

Well, there are Bassler's "Seven Steps To Success."

And, here's a breakdown of the results it has brought him.

Over \$50,000 a year in sales from 1941 to 1945 inclusive, this income derived each year approximately as follows:

Club sales	\$30,000
Ball sales	10,000
Accessory sales	5,000
Caddie Cart rentals	6,000
Total	\$51,000

Since 1945 when Bassler could start taking time out to give lessons he has averaged over \$5000 per year from this source, giving as many as 15 lessons in a day. And remember: the above sales were made with a staff of 3 to 4 girls during the war years as no young men were available.

Finally, Bassler is top money-winning pro in California area tournaments, adding in this manner an additional \$1813 last year in money prizes he copped in 15 accredited tournaments. He is top money winning pro in this area again so far this year. He plays in an average of 20 to 25 tournaments a year; all Pacific Coast opens, all national tournaments held within 1500 miles of his bailiwick and he follows the winter circuit from San Francisco to Phoenix every year. He was recently re-elected for his second term as first vice president and open golf tournament chairman of the Southern California PGA.

And here's the clincher. Bassler is only 37 years old!



U. S. RUBBER BALL SALES CHIEFS MEET

U. S. Rubber Co. district sales managers and home office sales staff met at New York to plan new steps in U. S. golf ball campaign. L. to R.: E. J. Regan, New York, sales asst.; W. M. Coy, asst. to sales mgr.; Paul D. Brady, district mgr., New York; R. W. Higgins, district mgr., Detroit; L. A. Martin, district mgr., Philadelphia; John W. Sproul, New York, sales mgr.; I. K. Brisbine, San Francisco, district mgr., West Coast; L. G. French, district mgr., Chicago; W. R. Lozar, district mgr., St. Louis and George T. McCarthy, New York, mgr., golf ball sales.