

# How Planning Increased My Pro Shop Sales



Bill Gordon

The knack of increasing business in the pro shop is not one of those things that "just happens." I have been able to show an increase in business of close to 25 per cent over each succeeding year for the past three years. My sales today are 400 per cent above my first year at Tam o'Shanter. Credit for success of this kind

can be attributed in part to the times, but in the main it depends upon:

1. Planning.
2. Selling quality products.
3. Adoption of a sales policy — personalized selling.
4. Enthusiasm.
5. An incentive plan for employees.
6. Budgeting sales.

I confess I have pessimistic moments when I have doubts about my being able to equal the past year's record or even approaching it—all of us have similar moments. It is time to start taking inventory when such doubts arise and begin planning ahead on merchandise to be purchased, setting up better displays, improvement in selling and jotting down new ideas.

Quality has no substitute. Top pro line golf merchandise can be the basis for personalized selling and good, conscientious salesmanship can make sales. I want every customer to feel that his buy in my pro shop is the best buy he can make anywhere.

I have made it a policy to guarantee all merchandise sold from my shop and I find that builds up business decidedly. It encourages customers to tell their friends of the treatment they receive if equipment they purchased is not up to what they may have expected and they have been able to return it or exchange it with reasonable adjustment.

Keeping in close friendly touch with the members gives the pro an advantage no other salesman has and leads to sales that are genuine personal service.

Keep "on top" of the member's game. The more interest shown, the more one can

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cash in on the contact. Don't wait for the member to tell you how he did—ask him how he played today—it pays dividends. Take a customer out for a free short lesson and give him some fundamentals which will help him improve his game. Personalized instruction with free tips gives a pro an opportunity to advertise and opens the way to sales. I find that by giving short free lessons I am not only continually getting new customers but I get repeat sales as well.

## Make Shop Center of Interest

Making the pro shop a center of activity will naturally develop sales opportunities. The good pro makes a point of building and maintaining golf interest, generating enthusiasm and winning friends in order that members will drop in after the game or during the evening. It takes concentration, effort and planning to get members into the habit of dropping in but it pays off in sales. The pro who fails to arouse some enthusiasm about the game and draw his membership around him is apt to find himself "outside looking in" with little or no business.

My sales are better after 4 P.M. in my shop than any other time of the day, that is, the cash volume of sales is greater and that is what counts. I find this time provides the greatest opportunity to sell. Then the player is generally at his leisure, looking around and off guard.

Proper display of merchandise is essential. Every item will have a certain amount of sales appeal if displayed properly. But the most important thing is to get the customer in the shop. Then treat him right and keep him happy.

One feature of display that promotes sales in my shop is a rack in the center of the floor on which putters, approach and trap clubs are shown. It's an idea I strongly recommend to other professionals.

Presenting the proper merchandise at the right prices, keeping it looking new and closing out shopworn items certainly go a long way toward promoting sales. However, plenty of stock will be left at the end of the year if the pro doesn't make a

special point of catering to every member, if he doesn't spark them with enthusiasm and create a welcoming atmosphere in his shop to keep members coming back again and again.

### Give Shop Help Incentives

It is foolish for a pro in a club of any size at all to attempt to do the job single-handed. Every employee, regardless of his job, should be working with you as well as for you. Give your shop men incentive to constantly do a better job. Then they not only help themselves but they help the shop. All of my assistants receive a good salary, room and board, and commissions. I think it is logical to assume a commission can't be given on every sale no matter how small so I have set a base figure of \$10.00 above which commissions are paid. If an employee sells three balls he gets no commission but if he sells a dozen he gets five per cent of the sale. Commissions are paid at the end of the month.

My assistant who has charge of the club rack gets 50c on every set of clubs in storage over 350. His commission on club cleaning this fall will pay for his railroad ticket to Miami. In addition, if he has helped me put over a sale I pay his commission in full. The more my assistants make the more I make and the better my working force becomes.

On the negative side and a wise precaution for every pro is this bit of advice which will pay dividends in the long run. Do not high-pressure a member into any sale. The less high-pressure selling around the pro shop the better the business will be. Never let your first sale be the last. Make a sale that will bring the customer back.

Finally, here is a tip which many pros may have overlooked: I know many of them start cleaning out their shops the last of August. This is a mistake. By budgeting my sales by the month I am able to keep working until the end of the year. My September and October sales run about 30 per cent of my gross for the year. Last Christmas my sales ran \$3000 when my shop was supposed to be closed. Merchandise was on hand to sell, members dropped in, sales were made, and goods delivered. Of course, every pro operation isn't the same but I contend a lot of business is "thrown out the window" by not keeping on the job and working at it 12 months of the year.

**WHITLOW NEW HOFA PRES.**—Ray Whitlow, Topeka (Ks.) CC recently was elected pres. Heart of America Greenkeeping Assn. VP elected is L. E. Lambert, Oakwood CC, Dodson, Mo. Sec.-treas. is Chet Mendenhall, Mission Hills CC, Kansas City, Mo.

## Why Al Ciuci's Shop Sales Increased

Al Ciuci, pro at Fresh Meadow CC, who used to be one of the tournament stars is still starring in shop business management that gets big volume by serving members.

Al's sales in 1947 jumped over those of 1946 and he says some of the reasons why are:



Al Ciuci

1.—Fluorescent lights and new show-cases that make merchandise look more appealing. Fluorescent lights put a lot of life into cold looking merchandise such as golf clubs.

2.—August sale that cleared out surplus stock of accessories. You can't guess right all the time what's going to sell fast, so move the stuff and get your money back. These sales also get member realizing that he can pick up some great bargains at his pro's shop.

3.—Larger stock and finer qualities in accessories. You can't sell what you don't have. Members expect top quality at reasonable prices from you. Whatever's in your stock that is better than can be bought elsewhere raises your reputation as a merchandising authority on the job for your members.

4.—Blown-up pictures of star players for the shop. Big pictures put some "punch" into shop display and provide an enlivening change from the pictures generally displayed around pro shops.

5.—Added another teaching pro to facilitate good service to the members. Get a good assistant and develop him as a member of your team for serving the members. The better the members are served by your staff the more you'll make.

6.—A new line in swimming pool accessories. Surprising how much the kids who swim will buy and charge on daddy's account. But watch your lines carefully. It's a new field to you and you might get stuck by going too deeply into what you don't know about.

7.—Change display on counter in center of shop each week. Feature a "special" every week. The looks of a pro shop may get so monotonous to members they get out of the habit of expecting something new. Experiment with changes of display so you'll always be bringing your shop stock freshly before members' eyes.