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Pros Tell Ideas That Increase Sales

By HERB GRAFFIS

Attractive programs of events are the most certain means of keeping pro shop business up through the summer and well into fall, according to the experience of successful pros. That's no new discovery. Club managers found a long time ago that at the majority of clubs house volume depended to a large degree on the party programs.

The pro who has live committees staging men's and women's events has good assurance of traffic on the course and at the shop but if the committee only have routine programs of events the pro himself has to be the sparkplug and engineer of events for which the committee gets credit and the pro gets business.

Often the women's committees complain about not having enough of a prize budget. Sometimes it pays the pro to contribute a few prizes. At numerous clubs the pro can get prizes contributed by members or local businessmen to expand the list of competitive events and the prize list so more players have a chance to win something. The prizes are good advertising for contributing local merchants.

Darrell Napier at the Country Club of Virginia says he never has to resort to forced draft to keep shop sales up in late summer and early fall because the club's calendar is drawing play in that period. There are team matches, parent-child events, stag day, sweepstakes with wide distribution of prizes and, in September, the club championship with eight days of qualifying.

"Sales" Increase Play

Pro opinion is divided on the wisdom of price-cutting sales. The type of club and membership generally determines whether it's wise to have sales. Incidentally there are late August and September sales at

the pro shops of some of the foremost clubs, so the income of members doesn't seem to be the controlling factor. Sometimes it seems that the temperament of the pros rather than that of the members determines whether or not there are going to be sales.

Bud Williamson at the Country Club of Lincoln, Neb., is one of the most alert pro businessmen. Bud sometimes gets overstocked as the result of trying to give his members better supply service than they possibly could get elsewhere.

When pros overloaded with balls during the Korean war shortage scare, Bud found himself overstocked. He stacked 100 doz. on a table with a large sign, "\$9.85 in dozen lots only. \$1 each, out of the case." He sold 75 dozen balls in two weeks and sold some members who'd been buying cheap cut-price balls at stores.

When he's overstocked on shirts he puts an assortment on a table and makes sure that there are enough very special buys in the lot to make the sale present bargains the buyers will talk about. That sort of a sale stirs up a lot of talk among women who frequently buy more for their husbands than their husbands would buy for themselves.

Bud brings out an interesting point in connection with apparel sales. He says they promote the smart grooming which should be the mark of the first class club member. Men aren't as inclined to buy as women are in response to a genuine bargain appeal in quality merchandise. So the women get the men stocked up and the men have a wider variety of good-looking golfwear.

Williamson also has noticed that golfers who are prevailed upon to buy adequate golfing wardrobes, and balls in dozen quantities, don't go for long stretches before they buy again. Like

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qualifications are that he is a successful banker.

Generally the men are quite willing to admit their lack of experience for the job and will do their best to work with the superintendent for the good of the course; sometimes, however, their lack of experience may cause them to quibble over a perfectly proper expenditure and it is then that the superintendent needs to be well-informed. If he can explain the matter to the satisfaction of his new chairman, the chairman won't just "have to take his word for it".

The chairman has to face the board of governors and he wouldn't feel happy in asking for an appropriation when his only explanation is that the superintendent says we need it. Sound accounting procedures and comparative figures would go a long way towards convincing a new and inexperienced chairman that everything is as it should be.

As to the annual budget request, I think it most important that the expenses comprising golf course maintenance should be kept separate from everything else. The estimated cost of caddy supervision, the professional's salary or allowance, the cost of maintaining grounds which are not part of the golf course itself, and similar expenses, should constitute a similar request. If a reserve for the replacement of equipment is not maintained, the cost of new equipment needed should be separately shown and the same is true of

any major change in the course if a considerable expenditure is involved.

Minor changes which can be done by the club's own employees, without outside assistance, should be included in the golf course maintenance budget. If this procedure is followed, the golf course maintenance expenses will not be distorted by the inclusion of irrelevant items and the board of governors will be in a position to reach a decision with full possession of the facts. The board may then approve or modify the green committee budget request in the light of surrounding circumstances.

PROS TELL IDEAS

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sale of a new set of top price irons represents a gross profit of \$5 or \$6 a year, considering the time the clubs will be used before replacement with a more modern set. That gross profit may be further reduced by allowances and selling costs on trade-in sets and I'm inclined to think that the member who knows the least little thing about pro business must think that the pro who gives too much as trade-in allowance is a bad businessman."

Keep Close Watch on Stock

Dewey Longworth, Claremont CC, Oakland, Calif., long and widely known as a sound pro businessman, says that much

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of the difficulty pros may experience in shop merchandising operations is because they don't know how to buy, don't maintain close watch of inventory and don't work steadily and thoughtfully enough on their sales prospects.

Dewey says that his policy always is to make sales steady and not have spurts that require "sales." He keeps a daily inventory of stock and knows exactly what he has. That enables him to keep a clean, up-to-date inventory and get shipments on time so his stock never runs too low.

He has no sales and does not take trade-in clubs. He's in a location where the season is 12 months long so there is no need of "end of season" sales. He keeps close watch on seasonal variations in merchandise demand, especially for apparel items and says shop sales and lessons are steadily good because he always keeps a vigilant watch on his members' needs.

Display — Inventory Control; Keys

Another first class pro businessman in the San Francisco district is Harold Sampson at Burlingame CC. Harold does take trade-ins and he says they're a helpful factor in junior promotion. He sells some of the trade-ins to juniors and caddies and at Christmas gives some traded-in clubs to youngsters who like to play but can't afford to buy clubs.

Fred Austin at Merion GC makes fine pro shop service one of the valuable services at a great club. Fred operates the year around.

He says, "I find that most pro shop sales are spontaneous so if you have your stock well displayed (I use long narrow tables so my members can readily see what is available) your members often see articles they need and might have bought through window-shopping downtown.

"About 90% of my merchandise can be handled easily by those who come into my shop.

"The pro always should carefully watch his inventory so he won't be in the embarrassing position of being overstocked. But if the pro does find himself with some older models it's best to sell them to juniors with good allowances on their old clubs and, if necessary spreading the payments out on a monthly basis.

"It's highly important that the pro get the younger people in the habit of buying at the pro shop."

Charley Mayo, veteran pro at Hackensack (N.J.) GC, has taught many a successful younger pro the basis of good pro shop business management. Charley says that experience and good judgment teach a pro to keep his stock low in the middle of August if he's in territory where there's no winter play. "But don't keep it so low members may think busi-

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ness is slowing down," Charley warns. "Simply make your orders smaller."

Mayo makes the trade-in deals something that promotes good relations among the club's staff. The trade-in clubs are sold to club employees or their friends.

Al Collins, at Sleepy Hollow CC (NY Met dist.) in the spring, summer and fall, and at Nassau, Bahamas, in the winter, has no end-of-season selling problems because there's no end to his seasons. He is a smart merchandiser but, like the best of them, will make some bad buys. "Then," Al says, "I simply move it out at any price before it gets shopworn." Good trade-ins he takes to Nassau as rental sets. Through a former caddy who works at a big industrial plant he has more of a demand for traded-in clubs than he can supply.

Bob Marshall at Bala GC, Philadelphia, says that regardless of weather or general financial conditions the pro who watches his customers carefully while they're shopping can keep such accurate control of pro buying that he won't get overloaded. "Use your eyes and your head and stay in the shop as much as you can Saturdays, Sundays and holidays and you're bound to observe the buying trends of your members and govern your own buying accordingly," says Marshall.

Runyan Sells Style

Paul Runyan, who took time out from pro golf to become a successful salesman, returned to the pro field at the Annandale CC, Pasadena, Calif. Paul is a remarkably good pro businessman as well as a tournament performer of amazing durability. At Annandale he says the business is kept on a steady basis by continuously looking through the racks and discovering what people need. Paul makes the sage observation that if golfers had what they really need for their respective games pro sales volume would soar to astonishing heights.

Runyan remarks that he has "wonderful turnover of used clubs by pointing out to the member that it is better to buy 'junior' a good set of used clubs than to buy him a cheap new set."

Another phase of Paul's business that is exceptionally good is the sale of golf clothing to men and women. Paul's wife has taken charge of that and has created large sales volume entirely on the style basis.

Little Joanie has fine taste in dress and when she and Paul were on the tournament circuit she not only was a factor in establishing country club styles for women but made Paul one of the best-dressed man golfers. Now, like the smart wives of so many other successful professionals, she's showing how women's expert judgment in styles and materials can make the pro shop a style center.

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