

# Think of "Member First" and You Get Right Answers

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**G**OLF has become an immense and apparently complex business since the time I started as a caddie. My brother Sammy and I have talked about problems we've met in our work and have wondered if one of the biggest problems isn't that of conducting business at a fine club on such a completely efficient business basis that the members don't get the idea that the club is a business but think of it as an establishment operated on a pleasant basis entirely for the enjoyment of the members, their families and guests.

When we look at golf club business, taking the viewpoint that a man probably would take when he is paying to enjoy himself, instead of worrying as we do because we're paid for it, we find the solution of many golf business problems greatly simplified.

After many such discussions and repeated experiences I came to the conclusion that "the member first" is the only sound basic policy for professional and superintendent operations. It certainly is the simplest, surest and safest policy for the man who must do the work. He is directed to the right answers by taking that line of thinking and getting the right answers is what increases his income.

The complication is that sometimes the members don't know what they want. They don't know the golf business. The professionals and superintendents do; therefore they have to discreetly determine or decide what the members would want if they knew all the facts. In reaching most decisions the professionals and superintendents have got to bear in mind that there is one thing the members certainly do know and that is how much money is available for spending.

A fellow in the business may think a member is selfish. Well, what of that? Golf is the grandest of games but it is a rather selfish game. Who else thinks as much about your score as you do? But, as a club member instead of a club employee you would want everyone in your



Sammy

Johnnie

family and all of your guests to think very well of your judgment in becoming a member of a delightful club. So when any one of the employees of the club develops this opinion among members of your family or your guests that employee has done exactly the right thing in golf business.

## Golf Begins at Pro Shop

Golf begins at the pro shop. Perhaps the member isn't conscious of that fact. But the pro must be completely aware of it. So his shop must be convenient for the member, be attractive to the member and competently, cheerfully serve the member. The pro shop so located, so operated and with such an atmosphere of service pleasantly increasing the member's enjoyment of golf, is a successfully run pro shop.

Having a shop that emphasizes "the member first" in every phase is the one sure way to make a profit in pro merchandising and to get as near as possible to selling all the potential market. A shop that is obviously primarily operated for the pro's profit isn't nearly the money-maker for the pro that the "member first" shop is.

The more the member uses the club, which means the less per visit his dues cost him, the better business is for the pro. Teaching the members to play better so they'll play more and enjoy golf more, arranging and conducting golf events so everyone will have fun, meet great friends, and win a prize now and then,

are essential functions of the professional who really knows his business. Those are "member first" services that are vital to making a good income as a professional.

### **Junior "Member First," Too**

The "member first" policy again comes in with the junior classes which the professional or his assistant by all means should conduct during school vacation periods. What a marvelous thing it is to get the kids playing golf so fathers and mothers and their children can be playing together for years. No other outdoor game has that happy asset and the pro in thinking of "the member first" on the junior program is doing something that will keep his own heart bright and his reputation high for years to come.

Sales? They'll come along more than you probably could imagine and quicker and larger than you'd think, when those kids grow up. But that's not the idea that puts you to the time, expense and effort of the kid classes. The kids are part of your family because you are guided by "member first."

And while you're thinking about kids, "member first" is a sound foundation for your caddie operations. What kind of kids do you want to caddie for your members? How will your caddiemaster and you as professional train and supervise the boys so the members will say "we've got a great bunch of caddies at our club?" You have to make practically a little clubhouse of your caddie quarters, have recreation for the kids, provide good food at low prices for them and soft drinks and a place for them to change their clothes. In fact you must get quite a little of the "member first" policy in caring for the boys so they will think of the club about the same way the members do.

### **"All for One"**

Whatever your job in the club, professional, superintendent, manager, caddiemaster, you're teamed with the other department heads on the one big idea of "member first." The department heads have to coordinate their operations and their personalities on a "all for one and one for all" platform and that is done smoothly when all of the fellows responsible for the departmental operations of a club work on the "member first" understanding.

In the pro shop "member first" absolutely has to be the cardinal principle. The pro and his staff must have the

thought, always, that what they're selling amounts to more than money. If you sell clubs that don't exactly fit you're cheating someone who trusts you, but when you provide the buyer with exactly what he or she needs then you're selling something that's worth more than the money involved. Maybe you haven't got in stock just what's needed. If you've put across the sincere "member first" idea, the buyer will wait until you can get for him precisely what you know is needed in carrying out your "member first" policy.

As a pro-supt. I know that these are specialized businesses that require a great deal of constant study and hard work. But I can't expect our club's officials and committeemen to devote a fraction of the time to their club executive duties that I must spend on the operating duties for which I'm paid. What I've got to do is again think of "the member first" and realize that anyone who assumes unpaid responsibilities and work as a club official is making a sacrifice that I must understand and try to lighten.

And how can I best do that? By thinking of "the member first" and have that govern all my recommendations and work. That's not an easy thing in these days of labor shortages and high wages but I'm inclined to believe that if we who are responsible for golf course maintenance could get across to officials and members that we are trying to solve our labor problems so the members will be satisfactorily served instead of just struggling with a tough labor situation, we'd get a better answer all around.

### **Grass or Member First?**

Sometimes we may make errors in course management by thinking of grass first. If we'd think of "the member first" and realize that acquainting the member with what we're up against in trying to make the course perfect for him, we'd probably have a bit easier time with our inevitable turf and hazard maintenance troubles.

"Member first" isn't as easy as it might sound. We in the golf business are heir to the frailties and faults of mortals. The member too may not always think of his customer first. But still the policy is worth keeping in mind as much as you possibly can, because when you look at your problem at the club through the eyes of the fellows who pay the bills, then call upon your own experience, ability and



### NEAT DISPLAY IN SMALL SHOP AVOIDS CROWDED LOOK

Miami Shores GC, Miami Shores Village, Fla., has a pro shop so small that a lot of fellows would have given up trying to make it real bigtime establishment. But not pro Jim McLaughlin. He's got the place packed with stock but it's so neatly, conveniently displayed it doesn't look crowded. Jim's staff appears (l to r): Carl Anderson, asst.; Jim McLaughlin; Joe Benner, asst.; Dale McIvor, shop asst.; Mary Porter, sec.; Bob Patrick, starter; Bill Dettmer, teaching pro; Dave "Dad" Porter, asst. J. Fred Smith, mgr., and Glen Bird, supt., are team-mates elsewhere at work. The Miami Shores operation comes about as close to private type of operation as you'd want to see, and this pro shop service is one of the points that visitors mention as making them feel as though they were receiving gold coast attention. In front of the counter the display of putters and approach clubs does a big volume business. Location of stock is frequently changed. Everything's always kept in clean good order. The layout, display and general attractiveness make this a marvelous achievement in what's really a tiny shop.

effort, you can think straighter to the right answer.

The ultimate right answer you are seeking, as a man in a business, is financial success and security. In getting this correct answer you won't be far wrong if you give priority in your planning to the man from whom the money you want must come — the member.

#### Walter Rector, True Temper President, Dies

Walter W. Rector, 65, pres., True Temper Corp., died May 16 at his home at Cleveland, O., following a long illness. Rector, as head of the largest steel shaft manufacturing company, was a strong factor in the golf business. He was a fine

golfer, and a grand fellow. His business judgment made him one of the men behind the scenes in golf and influential in the other businesses in which True Temper (formerly American Fork and Hoe) had interests.

Rector was born on a farm near Fennimore, Wis., one of ten children of Mr. and Mrs. Fred E. Rector. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1906 and married Lillian Post, who with a son, William G., survive him.

His first business connection was with Marshall Weels Co., Duluth, which he left as gen. mgr., in 1934 to become gen. merchandise mgr. of Montgomery Ward Co. In 1938 he went with American Fork and Hoe as merchandising director, was made vp and director in 1941, executive vp and gen. mgr. in 1948, and pres. in 1949.