

# What Merchandising Means in Pro Business Success

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**T**HERE IS an interesting and healthy competitive situation in country club operation. It is the competitive and co-operative merchandising of the pro, the course superintendent and the house manager. Each of them is merchandising facilities, service and personality and when this merchandising—which is the over-all term for every phase of selling — is of a balanced high standard the club is attractively and efficiently operated.

The course superintendent merchandises golf playing facilities and to a great extent has to manufacture as well as sell his product. No matter how good the design of the course, if it isn't in top condition and pleasingly groomed the superintendent's merchandising falls down. But when the superintendent's merchandising is superior he brings customers into the store—which is the club — and the other departments also benefit.

## Members Know Good Merchandising

The club manager's merchandising job also starts with the manufacturing of excellent food and expert service by his staff. He has outside competition from other eating and drinking establishments that is stronger than the outside store competition the pro has. The manager must make his merchandising of a character that is up to the exclusive nature of his club's membership. He has, in the "member and guests only" policy, an equivalent of the "pro only" merchandise that is a strong and distinguishing feature of successful pro shop operation.

What the club operating department

heads always have to remember — and the successful ones do — is that they're doing a merchandising business with a class of people who are paying to receive the best in merchandising and who know what the best is because they receive it at places where they spend their money.

This necessity for the best in merchandising applies to the pro shops at the public and semi-public courses as well as at the private clubs. The patrons of the pay-as-you-play courses now are expecting almost private club service and are critical if they don't get it.

The pro has made tremendous advances in business and made great contributions to the growth of golf by acquiring a clear understanding of merchandising and applying that understanding.

Merchandising is everything that has to do with the function of a merchant—find out accurately what the market wants and needs, buying correctly, displaying and otherwise advertising attractively, selling pleasantly and with expert service in meeting the buyer's requirements, keeping stock of correct scope, keeping records that show at any moment just how the business stands financially, and making a profit in cash and customer good will.

## Merchandising Rates the Pro

Merchandising sets the rating of every detail of the pro department's operations. If the bags aren't brought out quickly or if the clubs aren't cleaned properly that's a black mark against the merchant's delivery service. If the lesson tee session is conducted as merely another routine as-



### FIELD OF FUTURE "TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS"

Tuesday afternoons about 45 girls and 40 boys from Las Vegas (Nev.) High School get free golf instruction at Wilbur Clark's Desert Inn CC, through an arrangement made between Howard Capps, Desert Inn pro, and Pat Diskin, high school athletic director. The class is in its second semester and some of the kids are getting to be fine golfers. One youngster who'd never had a club in his hand prior to instruction at the Desert Inn course got good enough to qualify for the 1953 Jaycee National Junior championship. The big boys, left to right: Howard Capps, Wilbur Clark, Pat Diskin and George Bruno, of Capps' pro staff.

sembly-line job then the merchant's reputation suffers because the customer is bound to think the time is devoted only to taking the customer's money.

The shop that isn't kept constantly clean and orderly, that doesn't have its stock attractively displayed and frequently changed to freshen the appeal, is a liability to a pro's reputation as a merchant.

The successful pro realizes that he always is subjected to his members' appraisal as a merchant, whether that appraisal is consciously or subconsciously made. This is a merchandising nation and the national temperament is to admire good merchandising and regard merchandising defects as signs of general inferiority.

#### Wise Buying Is Basic

Pro shop merchandising starts with wise purchasing of stock. This must be soundly based on the pro's expert judgment of what his customers want and need. A primary test of merchandising is that of buying what the market will like rather than what the retailer himself happens to like. As an example a shirt that a pro thinks is smart-looking some of his members wouldn't wear to a dog fight.

The pro's stock for sound merchandising must be acceptable to his trade, be of quality up to pro shop standard and be good value for the retail price paid.

Profits are determined by the turnover of capital invested. Merchandise must be that which will sell rapidly, with minimum

of push (pro shop customers prefer to buy rather than be sold), and which will not freeze money on the shelves. The stock must be that which will sell at a standard margin of profit.

Merchandising requires that you survey your market, analyze your customers' requirements and purchase according to those needs. If you over-buy you can't eat the stuff. You have to get rid of it at cost and lose your overhead and interest on your investment. If you under-buy you can't sell what you haven't got.

#### Make Stock Look Big, New

Merchandising also demands that you arrange and display your stock in a pleasantly interesting and impressive way. I have seen some pro shops where thoughtful display made \$1500 worth of stock look like a \$5000 inventory, and others in which \$5000 in stock looked like a \$1500 inventory in a pawn shop.

Good merchandising calls for rearranging your shop stock about twice a month. If merchandise remains in the same place it loses its fresh appeal to potential buyers. A change of location creates the impression of new merchandise; something the prospective buyers haven't seen before. The men and women who come into the shop will react to the new look of the shop, and "new" always is a word of strong magic in selling.

It shouldn't be necessary to remind a pro that the shop must always be kept neat and clean regardless of the amount of

traffic coming in muddy-shoed from the outside and handling merchandise. But the crowded hours of a pro's job, the work his assistants have to do (and sometimes the negligence or inadequate training and supervision of assistants) may let the attractive appearance of the shop deteriorate without the pro realizing the slump.

### **Sloppiness Creates Gossip**

The members notice that untidiness and they talk about it. The women golfers especially are quick to see the slightest lapse from good housekeeping and good store-keeping in a pro shop; and in the pro, too. The pro who isn't neatly groomed doesn't fit a good job. Careless about hair cuts, shaves, manicures, BO, halitosis and attire can stir up more talk among women members than there'd be if the pro set a new course record.

The pro himself is to a great extent the foremost exhibit of good merchandise and good merchandising.

Selling, which some believe to be about all there is to good merchandising, is the pay-off factor among all the essentials that comprise good merchandising.

And good selling simply cannot be done unless the seller thoroughly knows the merchandise.

### **Know Your Stock**

Learn everything you can about your stock; how and why it's designed and made the way it is. When possible the professional should visit the factories in which his goods are made and learn what accounts for the value of his products. If he can't visit the plants he should write for information that will help qualify himself and his assistants as authorities on the goods they're selling.

Pro quality merchandise definitely is superior but does the pro himself know just why? The potential buyer comes into a pro shop and looks at clubs and can't tell why one club should sell at \$8 and another which looks to the shopper about the same as the \$8 club sells for \$12 or more. The shopper may think that a golf club is merely a head, shaft and grip thrown together. The pro has to know of the many new techniques, machinery and materials used in making the new products of greater value to their buyers.

The pro shop customers don't know, but the pro should, that there are 54 component parts and 82 operations in making a Hagen wood club. This information to the pro who knows the details makes interesting education, effective selling and customer satisfaction and pride when it's

passed along by the pro shop salesman who is doing a competent job of merchandising.

Good merchandising is a basic responsibility of the pro in getting, holding and profitably handling a good job. The pro can't ease up for a day in his study and application of good merchandising. I can share with the pro this continuous duty of looking for new merchandising ideas and of seeing that what I know about good merchandising is applied, for I have the job of merchandising to the pro.

### **Do You Know the Answer to This Tax Letter?**

**G**OLFDOM received the following letter from an eastern golf club president:

"Some of our directors have suggested that our club, which now is run as a non-profit corporation, be reorganized as a profit-making corporation. As you know, under the present system of taxation we pay a 20 per cent tax on all dues, initiation fees, etc.

"I am particularly interested in knowing if you can give me the names of any clubs which have made this change so I can contact them for a report of their experience.

"I also would appreciate any other information which you may have that would be helpful on this problem."

If you have any of the answers please write them to Herb Graffis, Editor, GOLFDOM, 407 S. Dearborn st., Chicago 5, Ill., and the answers will be forwarded.

As the reduction or elimination of the 20 per cent tax on club dues and initiation fees was not included in revision of tax legislation, country clubs, already heavily taxed, must explore every possibility for reasonable relief. The National Golf Foundation has been campaigning for excise tax relief for country clubs and the USGA has asked that clubs and golfers write congressmen to ease the tax.

So far there's no score.

In view of the necessity of encouraging building as a measure against business recession, the matter of tax revision to free construction bonds of golf club courses, clubhouses and other construction from the 20 per cent tax seems appropriate but no progress has been made.

The 20 per cent tax is proving to be an especially high hurdle for clubs wanting to take in very desirable young businessmen who were away at war for four or five years and have had to meet heavy expenses of home construction and young families since their return.