

Merchandising Trend Favors Alert Professionals

By KIP BOWEN

THE trend in merchandising is swinging the pro's way.

That trend is putting the pro in a position where he has much larger opportunities, much heavier responsibilities, and spots him in the position of being subjected to a comparison with the other fine retailers with whom the customers have been doing, and are doing, business.

This is the time that is putting the pro to a new test.

The trend toward suburban shopping centers with their minimized travel and parking problems and the decided preference for intimate and expert service which has brought a large increase in the business of specialty shops, strongly favors the big increase of pro retailing business.

But the serious problem for the pro lies in the fact that he isn't only a retail merchant. He is a teacher, a golf player, a promotion man, a club tournament planner and manager, a personnel manager, a buyer, a display man, a publicity man, and a salesman.

There's a whole lot more to being a pro than simply turning from amateur to professional status.

Best for Players; Best for Pros

The club pro businessman who really qualifies as a businessman is actually in a position most merchants would envy. The only reason the pro is in retailing business at his shop is because that service is very much needed by his customers. The improvements in pro shops haven't been mainly because the pro wanted to make a better income. They've been made because the players at private clubs and fee courses now regard convenient and first class service of supplies as essential. The club that modernizes its pro shop is doing more for its members than it is doing for its pro.

Stores Want What Pro Has

The big department stores are forced into establishing suburban branches. They must try their best to get what the pro

has — ideally, good, properly-priced merchandise close to the point of use.

But very few other stores can get an asset the pro often has, a "captive audience" of members or fee course players, and the buyers' confidence in the professional as an authority who knows exactly what the player needs and all about the product to supply that need. In those respects the able pro businessman has a big advantage over most other retailers.

In capitalizing his superior specifications for merchandising the pro can't always go at the task in the manner of highly experienced and strongly financed big retailers. The big retailer wouldn't try to compete with the pro playing golf and the pro often is out of his league if he tries to beat the big retailer at his own game.

Merchandising Basic Principles

There are basic principles at which the pro can do just as well as most of the real good merchants in other lines.

The pro must have a shop that is immaculate and orderly. The lighting, painting, window drapes, floor covering and displays have to be thoroughly attractive and mirror the spirit of a game that is fun.

There has to be constant careful attention to women's judgment. The old days of the careless masculine treatment of the pro shop with an atmosphere slightly above that of an old pool hall are gone.

The employees have to shine in the pro shop now. They've got to know the customers and the merchandise and radiate a genuinely pleasant interest in properly supplying each customer's needs.

One edge that the big stores have on pros is in the big stores hiring and training buyers who are specialists.

Buying Education Needed

The pro can well pay more attention to his education as a buyer. What, when and how to buy determines the success of every retail business. Pros often have learned what stores have learned;

that women are the toughest buyers because they're the best. It is the women who help the store buyers make selections of styles, colors and materials and it's the pros' wives who, in most cases, have accounted for the tremendous advances in pro shop retailing.

The women can tell the pro, as they tell the store buyers, that nationally branded merchandise is uniformly the best buy. It isn't here today and gone tomorrow. It is women's influence too that has directed the buyers to the discovery that it's better to have depth in a few good lines than a light coverage with many.

Also to women is due the finding that merchandise plainly marked sells most, easiest and quickest. Pros sometimes are fooled by believing that because they're at wealthy clubs plain marking of prices isn't important. The wealthy got wealthy by watching money.

Handicaps to Pro Buying

Pro buying procedure generally imposes a heavy handicap on pros — a handicap store buyers won't permit. Salesmen come into pro shops when the pro is busy with customers. Stores won't permit that.

No buyer or salesman can do the job properly together if there is distraction from customers in the shop. The salesman can't present his line properly and the professional can't buy with his records handy to guide him and protect him against a pessimistic or overly-optimistic mood or salesman high pressure.

The pro should have his shop assistant present when the buying is being done so the assistant will learn about the merchandise and the assistant's observations and judgment can be utilized and developed.

Progress in pro merchandising is being registered by sounder buying well in advance. The consignment deals are thinning down in pro shops. They have disappeared at the better stores. The shops with good buying can sell what they know is good and pay no premium for merchandise frozen on consignment at an untold number of retailing establishments.

Keep Shops Fresh

Displays in the well operated pro shops are changed often. The locations of the merchandise sections are changed. That gets people walking around the shop. How often in pro shops the ball counter and cash register are right by the door — the worst of all places to encourage looking around at merchandise in the shops.

"Suggestive" display and selling — for instance, selling headcovers along with woods, asking the ball buyer if his golf glove is O. K. — is increasing at pro shops and it's a service because the golfer is inclined to forget what he needs.

Every buyer is going to buy something that won't move. If it doesn't, in your shop, mark it down before too long, and get your money out of it to use profitably in getting something else that will sell. Perhaps the slow-moving item would sell in other pro shops. Then use the salesman and see if they can't help you transfer that part of your inventory. The manufacturer and salesman don't want merchandise frozen any more than the pro does.

Architects Recommend Limited Use of Motorized Golf Cars

The motorized golf car and attendant problems of regulation and course maintenance was a main topic of discussion at the recent annual meeting of the American Society of Golf Course Architects at the Belleview Biltmore Hotel, Bellair, Fla. Viewing with alarm the rapid rise in the indiscriminate use of the motorized vehicles on golf courses the group took the stand that, "It is the belief of the American Society of Golf Course Architects that the use of motorized vehicles to transport players is contrary to the spirit of the game of golf. The benefits derived by exercise and companionship are diminished by the use of such vehicles.

"Inasmuch as the motorized vehicle damages the course materially, especially around the greens and during inclement weather, it introduces a problem in design and maintenance which makes the use of such vehicles undesirable. Therefore, we recommend that their use be limited to those with a medical certificate."



Newly elected officers of the Board of Governors, American Society of Golf Course Architects, (l. to r.) Robert F. Lawrence, Miami Beach, Fla., vice pres.; James Gilmore Harrison, Turtle Creek, Pa., pres.; William F. Bell, sec.-treas., Pasadena, Calif.