

# Pro Merchandising— It's A Blend of Sound Judgement, Ingenuity

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Probably no other breed of businessman is on the receiving end of more hints, suggestions and tips on how to run his business than the pro shop operator. The reason for this abundance of unsolicited help is basically the nature of the average pro himself. A three-way personality who must divide his time and affection among his duties as teacher, player, and merchant, the pro is viewed as fair game for any amateur management consultant with a penchant



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for dispensing free advice.

Another reason, of course, is the pro's invariably courteous reaction to the proffered guidance of even the most uninitiated, if well-meaning, advisor. For if the truth be known, the average pro welcomes suggestions that may generate an idea calculated to improve his business operation. Since the majority of pros are players and teachers first and merchandising men second, their thirst for business knowledge is readily understandable.

## Pamphlet Got Response

We learned this first-hand last year when we distributed a pamphlet of modest proportions offering pro shop merchandising tips from the point of view of a supplier. The response from our pro friends was such that we have issued an expanded version, complete with illustrations, which adds a few more ideas sparked by our personal observation of shops throughout the U. S. For whatever they're worth to you, here in a somewhat condensed form are most of the suggestions in "I'll Trade You Business Tips for Golf Tips," followed by my own comments,

which do not appear in our brochure:

1. "A good first rule for your shop is Relax. Make it pleasant, informal, not too commercial-looking. And don't 'push' too hard for a sale."

If there's one sure way to lose friends and alienate customers it's to act the part of a high-pressure retail salesman. I think you'll agree that a pro shop should never try to emulate the downtown haberdashery except in the quality of merchandise and service it offers. The pro's primary function is to give his club members advice and guidance in all golf matters, including the equipment and apparel they buy. Your shop should be a comfortable, relaxed spot. Give your shop a professional atmosphere, but don't make it too commercial lest you discourage potential customers who are seeking what only you can offer them — your expert knowledge.

## Stick to Sound Principles

This does not mean that a shop should disdain all the principles of a sound retail operation. On the contrary, it means that the principles should be applied even more diligently in a pro shop than in a retail store. The difference is in how these are applied.

2. "Stress merchandise that sells best. Feature the proved sellers and 9 times out of 10 your customer will buy the staple even if he came into your shop with a special item in mind. You miss more sales than you make with a lot of gimmicks and novelties."

My own feeling is that in too many shops you can't see the goods for the gimmicks. Unless your shop is located in a cavern, you're bound to be space-conscious. Every sq. ft. of your precious floor space must produce revenue in proportion to the space allotted the displayed merchandise. So why clutter up your shop with "junk" when you can use the space more judiciously?

By all means, stock and display current novelty items but use discrimination. Remember that your profit-space ratio often spells the difference between a lucrative and mediocre operation.

## Make It Tempting

3. "Once in a while, try imagining that your shop belongs to somebody else and that you just happened in. Are things arranged to tempt you to buy? Something you hadn't planned to buy? Open your merchandise up. Lay it out. Drape it. Make it inviting to look at, pick up, try on . . . to buy!"

This is one of those intangibles of the

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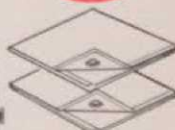
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pro shop business. No amount of merchandising knowhow and business ability will make up for a shop that simply fails to appeal visually, and even more important, emotionally, to your customers. A well-run shop should be an inviting place to enter time and again. Chances are that the average customer who never returns to a pro shop after his first purchase was repelled by its atmosphere.

Your own experience can tell you why. Have you ever walked into a store for the first time, and walked right out again for no apparent reason? Likely as not, the store was cold, uninviting and vaguely (even sub-consciously) depressing by virtue of its closed stocks and shelves, and an "ask-the-salesman-if-you-want-to-look-at-the-merchandise" atmosphere.

## Give Him Free Hand

4. "Hire a good assistant, if possible. You lose a lot of business when you're out on the course if you don't have a right-hand man to do the selling in the shop. Or, better still, get him to do some of the teaching while you mind the store. It pays off big."

Consciously or otherwise, many pros seem to resent the demands placed upon

their time by the shop. If you have to do all of the teaching, try to hire an assistant who likes selling. Why not let him assist in the buying also? At any rate, your shop is the money-maker (or should be), and it needs all the time you can give it.

5. "Go easy on ordering as you approach the season's end. Let your stocks run down, but be sure to keep up your assortment of staples in all the popular sizes. Never worry about carrying good numbers over to next season. If you return them, you'll have to re-order and pay double shipping costs."

This takes us back to staples, but from another angle. Let's be certain we're talking about the same thing, though. A staple, such as golf bags, clubs, shoes or slacks, is a product that stands up, sales-wise, year after year. At the other extreme is the novelty item which enjoys momentary popularity only to die a sudden death when the fad runs dry. In maintaining your inventory, don't be afraid to err on the side of conservatism. Sticking with a winner is a good rule-of-thumb whenever you're in doubt.

Dick Tarlow's article on pro merchandising will be concluded in January.