

What the Pro Can Do to Improve Sportswear Sales

Shops that do a big volume in slacks, shorts, blouses, etc. concentrate on four important factors . . . They are outlined for you in this article

By **JACK LUST**

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From time to time I hear from the conservative professionals, who I visit in my travels around the country, "I am running a golf shop, not a haberdashery." Yet, there is divided opinion among them regarding the potential of the sale of hard goods (equipment) as opposed to soft goods (sportswear). Many pro shops do a substantial volume in soft goods, and every season the volume keeps growing.

There are now many pro shops in every section of the country that do a sportswear volume of from \$30,000 to \$50,000. This figure is about equivalent to the volume of an average specialty shop independently operated by a single owner with a full-time sales clerk. In addition, golf sportswear has become big business in the resort shops.

How to Become An Expert

I fully appreciate the feeling among many pros that their extensive experience and knowledge of golf equipment permits them to give expert advice to customers on clubs, balls, etc., thus resulting in

profitable equipment sales for them. On the other hand, many pros feel that slacks, Bermuda shorts, sweaters and blouses are a lot more difficult to properly present, fit and coordinate before they make a sale.

Naturally, everyone likes to buy from an expert. So, how does a pro become expert or half expert in soft goods. There is no magic formula. The average haberdashery clerk doesn't have to be the smartest guy around, nor does it take unusual training to properly use a tape measure or to accurately use a catalog. For the pro and his assistants to become professionals in sportswear, they need to know: (a) what to buy, (b) how to buy and keep records, (c) how to display and sell, and (d) how to fit and measure.

What to buy. Considering the experience of successful pros, I advocate concentrating on selling shirts, slacks, sweaters, shoes, rain jackets, gloves, socks, Bermuda shorts and blouses. Use less colors, which will give more sizes per item (with the exception of high fashion and exclusive ladies items where one of each may be adequate). Do this rather than spread the items stocked too thin, that is, having 12 pieces each of a different color. This is particularly important for the pro who is just starting out with limited capital. He cannot afford costly mistakes.

Local factors will determine what price range to stock. It is comparatively simple to find out about how much members spend for various items. Do not be unduly concerned about the price range of local department stores. They cater to a much wider variety of customers. Buy to expose club members to sportswear fashions that will make them look like golfers.

Set Up A Buying Plan

The main street stores (especially in smaller towns), simply cannot afford to concentrate on golf sportswear. Buy for members who are pacesetters. Bring new styles to the attention of fashion conscious members. Be sure the pro wears sportswear fashions. He is the No. 1 pacesetter. If the pacesetters are sold, others will follow.

How to buy and keep records. There are still some pros who take the easy way

What is the fashion trend for 1965?

Jack Lust has listed some items that well-dressed golfers will be wearing this year:

☆ Women's fashions will continue along the narrower line (which shows the shape or lack of shape on women). There is a greater acceptance of culottes, skorts combinations and shirts with shorts combinations for the ladies.

☆ Paris fashion previews show the hem on all garments is rising 2/3 inches. This is good news for the pro shop. Most stores are not going to stock Bermuda-length but the shorter Jamaica-length shorts. This means the pro should have increased sales of Bermuda shorts.

☆ Men will be shifting to one pleat slacks or plain front (no pleat models). Pastel colors for both men and women will be strong again, with blue predominating.

☆ Stretch fabrics, successfully tested in ladies' sportswear, are available in men's slacks. But, thank heavens, they are loosely tailored like conventional slacks. For added comfort, men's slacks are also tailored with a built-in girdle, a wide rubber waistband.

Incidentally, men as well as women will sport a new fall color, intoxicatingly called *whiskey* (classically known as *Vicuna*).

out by simply telling a salesman, "Fix me up an order. Don't send me too much stuff." This is not really so bad if a person deals with a thoroughly competent and honest salesman. Obviously, selling sportswear to pro shops is now a full-time job. Therefore, the pro shop is going to be better serviced.

For the pro to take best advantage of this better service as well as to buy intelligently, the first prerequisite is to buy with a pre-determined plan. Establish a total budget that is based on all sportswear items sold in several previous seasons. Adjust goals in the light of past experience. Do not be afraid to stock up on hot items.

Place orders in advance to enable the manufacturer to process the order within his own estimated schedule. Successful store operators buy their spring sportswear during the previous fall or winter

This material is condensed from a speech given by Jack Lust to the South Central PGA Section at a meeting in Oklahoma City in February.

and their fall merchandise during the summer. Naturally, orders placed first are delivered first. This gives the pro a head start in sales by exposing members to new styles at the same time as the fashion stores, which means increased sales for the pro shop. Be sure to request a copy of each order in order to have proper followup.

Be Ready to Follow Up

When sending in special orders, keep them numbered and be sure to follow them up. It is good business at the height of the manufacturers' shipping season (May through July) to send in re-orders with second and third color choices as quick deliveries are made only from the stock currently on hand.

Purchase information entered in an itemized purchase ledger can be used for inventory control as well as for re-ordering purposes. Enter purchases by item on one sheet and the sales of the same item on an opposite sheet. Carry forward the balance for each new season. Establish a flexible breakdown for each item you plan to buy.

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Sportswear Sales

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How much should a pro buy in advance? Take a reasonably calculated risk. Advance order 50 to 60 per cent of anticipated sales. Leave room to re-order 40 to 50 per cent.

Keep Size Records

When ordering, in addition to allotting a money figure for each item, it is equally important to work out a properly balanced size scale. It would be helpful to keep an accurate record of sizes on shirts, slacks, and shoes that are sold in the pro shop. To keep a size record, remove the hang tag or pin ticket (most manufacturers imprint the size there) from each item sold and jot down the buyers' name and the date of the sale. Drop the tag or ticket in a box near the cash register. Once a month or so, post this information on a three by five index card. (If possible, list the in-seam for all slacks sold.) These records will be helpful when gifts are bought by a husband or wife.

How to display and sell. Display top quality merchandise in an eye-catching manner with plenty of lighting so that the true colors show. Whenever available, natural light is the ideal. Departmentalize the sportswear items. Have a distinct men's section and a more sophisticated ladies' section. Spotlight strikingly coordinated color schemes featuring items in which the shop carries a big stock.

A typical display for men is an eye-catching sweater with a shirt that blends, plus slacks and Bermuda shorts in harmonizing colors draped along side. A good rainbow display is a featured shirt with a number of shirts in all colors fanned out and backed up with the same shirt properly draped on a display stand. For the ladies, have a completely coordinated high fashion mannequin attired with matching shoes, knee-high socks, shorts, blouse and a hat. This is an ideal silent salesman.

Try A Shocker

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servative members. This is a most effective way to highlight the more basic selections available. Likewise, a couple of really high-priced items (even if one runs the risk of having to sell them at practically cost price) will create favorable comment about the shop and help build prestige.

The shopping dilemma of our economy is obvious. The big shopping centers are impersonal. More people have more money, but less time to spend it. There are many self-service stores with a few, half-informed clerks. The great plus feature in the pro's favor is that he has an opportunity to give his members the personal attention that is almost totally lacking in most stores. The courtesy of the pro shop staff accompanied by a little extra service and favors, will go a long way to build goodwill and develop the members' habit of buying in the pro shop.

Emphasize the Features

When a pro and his assistants make a sales presentation they should emphasize the technical features of each item. For example, when selling a rain jacket, as

there are many jackets in a wide price range on the market, make the customer appreciate the fact that the particular jacket being examined has "free swinging sleeves," that "it breathes" to reduce perspiration to a minimum. Casually mention that the pro himself has tested it. Or mention a known local golfer or nationally known golfer who wears and endorses the jacket, if you feel this has some impact. In other words, build consumer confidence by tying in the item to successful acceptance and satisfactory performance, as well as brand acceptance.

The manufacturers' sales catalogs are an invaluable source of accurate technical information. The pro can improve sales in his shop by having available the catalogs of the lines that he features. The pro, as well as his sales staff, should be familiar with the complete selection offered by his particular manufacturers, so that the information is available to back up special orders. The ideal time to digest the content of catalogs is when the new stock is received, checked off against the packing slip and put on display.



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Promote the Fashion Angle

At all times promote and sell the fashion angle. Sell fashion for the simple reason that there is built-in obsolescence in fashion. This season's hot style will have considerably cooled off by next season and will make room for new sales. By exposing members to new fashions, there is constantly created a desire to buy new outfits. Many members also certainly buy for fashion because they do not want to be outdone by members of another club.

How to fit and measure. Taking proper measurements is important. For example, to measure the waist on slacks, measure against the shirt right above the belt. Otherwise, almost two inches will be added to the customer if he is measured over his own pants. The tailor for the pro shop will advise whether he requires out-seam or in-seam measurements. Always have the customer adjust his slacks to the height he normally wears them.

Size Underestimated

Women are more familiar with their size, although they tend to underestimate it. It is therefore helpful for a pro and his

staff to become familiar with the specific cut of each model, consulting a descriptive catalog in detail as well as checking the descriptive label. Interestingly enough, the label will often say petite or slender, meaning the average figure. Care is required in helping a woman make a size selection. For example, a person would not think of handing a well-nourished woman a slim or slender model. The lady prospect may be lost for good. She will simply say "These shorts don't fit."

Excise-Income Tax Booklet Available from CMAA

Walter A. Slowinski, counsel for the CMAA, and attorney, Terry Nevel, have written a booklet entitled, "Federal Income and Excise Tax Considerations for Social Clubs." It contains an explanation of every current excise and income tax law pertaining to private clubs, plus many references to specific cases. Copies of the 26-page booklet are available for \$1.00 each from Club Management, 408 Olive St., St. Louis, Mo. 63102.