

**D**eveloping a good golf shoe business in a pro shop depends essentially on some hard work on the part of the pro and on how dedicated he is to seeing that his members have proper footwear.

The most important factor is getting established with the most reputable manufacturer you can find. I see my customers around the club all the time and if the shoes they buy from me aren't top quality, I'll hear about it. Find out how long the manufacturer has been in business. Study the salesman when he calls, for he's a reflection of the company. Carefully examine the line he shows you, question him, and find out how much selling support you'll get in the way of advertising, direct mail and publicity. Above all, be satisfied that he can consistently deliver quality shoes, regularly come up with distinctive styles, and deliver promptly.

Although I stock various makes of golf shoes, balls and other items, I've learned that it's better to handle just one manufacturer's shoe line in depth and possibly one other line of best sellers. When you do substantial volume with a company, you get preferred treatment and complete assurance of quality stock each year. (After all, he is depending on me to sell my 550 members.) Furthermore, the styles, colors, names and model numbers get confusing when there are several manufacturers' lines involved.

**S**ome styles aren't stocked in depth, depending on how well I think this or that one will sell, but I try to have a full line to show. If a prospect wants a style or color I haven't got in his or her size, I can assure quick shipment by my supplier. I also carry some low-price items because I found out they're necessary in competing with in-town retail stores.

Superior service is vital if a pro is to build a shoe business. There are about 70 different shoe sizes in a line, not to mention the styles, and no pro shop can carry them all in depth. Depending on how good my judgment is each year, I find that somewhere between 30 and 50 per cent of my sales will be for end sizes

## Keep your best foot forward

*Ways to develop your  
golf shoe business and  
receive a bonus  
in members' good will.*

**BY TONY NOVITSKY**

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I haven't got in stock. But I do know that I can get them in short order.

Nothing hurts a pro more than forgetting about his customers once he has sold them shoes. It's necessary to stand back of your transactions. If a customer feels that he or she has a legitimate complaint, take it up with the shoe manufacturer and see if something can be done. The reputable supplier does his utmost to see that his products measure up to quality standards. If a slip-up occurs, he's most anxious to correct it.

The manufacturer's salesman can be a big help in increasing shoe sales. Seek his advice on which styles and sizes to carry in depth and which to put on the "service" list. Question him about prices and how much stock to buy. If you have confidence in him, and he has been factory trained by a company that has market research programs, you can almost predict your turnover.

Every pro should constantly try to



*Tony Novitsky suggests shoe display tips to his assistant Dave Nelson. Tony says, "You can't sell 'em if they can't see 'em."*

refine his buying techniques. Many buy either too much or too little. I've learned one rule: Have on hand somewhere between 12 and 18 pairs of men's shoes for each 100 golfers in the club. For women's styles, this figure jumps to about 24 pairs per 100 active golfers. Each pro shop is different, however, and such things as the history of the club's shoe business, the income level of the membership and even the weather have to be considered.

When a pro is deciding what to buy and how much, he sometimes falls in a trap by buying what he likes and not necessarily what his members will like. Ask your wife or some of the fashionably dressed women in the club for opinions on a women's line. Test men's styles on some of the men. But always remember that a man buys primarily for comfort, then for wearing qualities and finally for fashion; a woman is impressed first and foremost by fashion.

I normally buy only one pair of shoes

per size when getting ready for a new season and I reorder as I sell. This is a safe rule if your supplier has good service capabilities. It's not a good idea if you're in a distant area such as Hawaii or a resort area where tourist business might be lost if you haven't got merchandise on hand. Another tip, when time permits I save my reorders so I can avoid extra single pair charges that, depending on the manufacturer, might run from 75 cents to one dollar.

Be sure to have some new shoe styles as well as proven ones in the shop. The word "new" has a strong attraction, particularly to women. Occasionally, I select a couple of "way out" styles as attention getters and find out from my salesman which styles and which lines are being advertised heavily by the company.

The "way out" shoe can be a good business builder. I purchased a gold golf shoe one year as a gimmick; it put the spotlight on my shoe department for

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quite a while.

Every pro should review his selling techniques and try new ones. Strange as it seems, some pros fail even to display their shoe lines so that prospective customers know they can get as good a selection and better quality than at an in-town store. If there is room, set aside an area for a shoe department in the shop. Always have a Brannock device and a measuring stick handy and visible. Put out posters and catalogs; change them around every week or so to liven up the section. Check with your electric company and get advice from one of its lighting experts for displays and spotlights.

Shoes always look best when displayed with apparel. Arrange them with slacks, shirts, shorts, and use a mannequin. Check with your salesman to see what



*Effective use of lighting will do much to focus club members' attention on merchandise. Also note the number of shoe styles.*

he has in the way of displays. Most important—keep things clean and the shoes dusted. I see that this is done each morning.

I make it a point to wear some of the things I sell so the club members can see for themselves what kind of merchandise I can offer. Furthermore, I ask my assistants to do the same, and my supplier helps by having a discount policy for teaching and shop assistants. We take full advantage of it.

A pro shop operator loses money if he surrenders his sales potential at the end of the regular season to in-town retail stores. I try to keep club members conscious of my business the year round. When the season ends, I offer specials on items being phased out by my supplier, but keep in stock those that will be continued next season.

**A** card file on each member is valuable in sustaining sales. Who buys what and when, what size each customer wears—it's all helpful. For instance, I often sell an odd-size pair of shoes at the end of the regular season simply by referring to the card file and finding out who among my clientele hasn't purchased a new pair for some time and who wears the size I have in stock. I make the sale; he or she gets a bargain.

When arranging stock, I find it is better to do so by sizes instead of style. I can usually interest a customer in one of the styles I have on hand provided it is in the right size, but not vice-versa. I also can work faster and easier when I know quickly where this or that size is.

Make use of direct mail in your selling efforts. Announce your stock in the club newsletter and periodically publicize sales, closeouts, or special events. Get some bill-stuffers from your supplier.

Finally, don't expect to get rich overnight. Building a shoe business takes time as well as know-how and energy. The three combined, however, can help you build an attractive income and enjoy the members' good will. ●