

# Merchandising Hypnotism

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trick is to catch a person's eye with a carefully placed bright color and then lead him on to looking at the rest of the merchandise on the shelf or in the case."

Suggestion leads the golfer this far. He may then spot something that he has intended to buy, or Benning or one of his assistants may point out something that stirs his fancy. Selling, or the theory behind sales, is that simple at the New Jersey club.

## Checks on Game

The Plainfield pro feels that there is one other way in which suggestion can be used in making sales, although at best it is only indirect. It consists of no more than checking once a week as to how a person is playing. This may result in some quite lengthy discussions, but it shouldn't be forgotten that when a person starts talking about his game, the conversation usually can be steered to a possible need for new clubs or for taking lessons.

"You can drop a hundred suggestions into a conversation when you are discussing clubs with a member," Benning remarks. "And most of us should be filling in more of our time with lessons. There's a big leak in lesson revenue simply because we aren't going after this business."

## Four Years in Training

A onetime caddie who later captained the Purdue University golf team while taking a degree in Economics at the Indiana school, Benning has been in golf since 1960. He deferred his entry into the field until after he did a three-year hitch in the Marine Corps and worked as many years in real estate and industrial sales. From 1960 until 1964, he traveled the apprenticeship circuit from Dayton, O. to Glendale, Calif. to West Caldwell, N.J. and spent a winter at Thunderbird in Palm Springs. He worked for Tom Foree, Jim Swagerty, Wes Ellis and Claude Harmon. All taught him a great deal about merchandising and Ellis and Harmon, both noted players, showed him the tricks of teaching. Benning furthered his golf education by playing the U.S. winter

tour two seasons and the Caribbean tour in 1964.

Benning's ideas about running a shop have been borrowed directly, or are variations on the things he learned from the above mentioned pros. He notes that all these men have one thing in common — they insist that a shop's success is contingent on how bright and fresh it looks and the kind of service the pro and his staff are willing to give.

## Service Never Wears Thin

"These fellows haven't done anything to revolutionize golf merchandising," says Bob Benning, "but they certainly have a thorough understanding of its fundamentals. One, in particular, used to talk about service. He said that among pros the word itself is overworked, but too many don't have a real concept of what it means. The thing to remember, this man emphasized, is that if you give it unstintingly it will never wear thin with members. That may be the best lesson I learned during my apprenticeship."

One other thing that Benning learned during his four apprentice years is that the pros he worked under insisted on getting the best possible assistants, and then gave them broad responsibilities after it was seen that they were going to work out satisfactorily. Bob copied their lead. As already has been implied, an assistant such as Chuck Genter is hard to improve upon. Quality in the pro staff at Plainfield doesn't stop with him because Benning has another very capable aide in Louis Don Aruma, the caddiemaster, who has been at the club for 40 years. A fellow like Don Aruma is particularly valuable because he is completely familiar with the likes, dislikes, whims, etc. of the members and can flash the pro signals as to how to proceed in handling them. Don Aruma, too, has been around long enough to know where to get cash for trade-in clubs when it may seem that it is almost impossible to give them away.

## Organize Par 3 Group

An association of Ohio Par 3 owners and operators is being organized by Karl Kushin, pro at Imperial GC, Mansfield, to seek relief from heavy taxes that are being imposed on recreational businesses.