

Now is the time for the club professional to lay out a sure program for a successful selling season in 1968. An avalanche of salesmen is coming to knock on your door, and with it begins the toughest job you have, but one that, if handled correctly from a buying standpoint, can be the most profitable time you spend with each salesman all year.

When you consider that in the next few months you have to plan your merchandising program for the 10 most profitable months of your operation, then you simply must say to your good member who wants to play golf with you, that you have a most important job to do — that is, solidify your profit picture for the year.

The cost of living, prices, employees' salaries and all services tendered you go up every season. Therefore, you are definitely faced with the prospect of *having* to make more money next year than in past seasons.

First of all, check out how you are allocating space in your pro shop — how much space you devote to clubs, bags, balls, gloves, men's and ladies' apparel, shoes. This is called "budgeting" your shop space.

Simply stated, it means this: every square foot of space should be stocked to get the top dollar profit-wise for the coming season, knowing all the while that

Shoot for a Successful '68

By ERNIE SABAYRAC

Whether it's budgeting space in your shop, buying or selling equipment or apparel, you should plan now for maximum profits next year.

quite a bit of merchandise that you will order will have to be held in abeyance in your stock or storage room.

I have felt for some time that too much space on the pro shop floor has been used for golf clubs and bags and that none of it helps the volume of sales. I also feel that this type of display in selling golf equipment leads your customers to believe that the merchandise can be bargained for, because it looks like you have too much inventory on the floor itself — which you actually do. I would like to state emphatically that golf clubs and bags should be sold from

the "*professional standpoint*," meaning simply that your customer only wants to buy clubs from you if these clubs will help improve his golf game.

Of course, there's just one way to prove it and that is to take the customer out to the practice tee with a variety of clubs with different specifications and then let him prove it to himself by hitting balls under your expert tutelage.

When golf clubs are sold from that standpoint then there is absolutely *no* bickering or asking for discounts on that equipment. The equipment proves to the player that it will improve his game and neither price nor brand is much object in this instance.

Of course, you should have a back-up inventory of clubs, bags and balls, but I

feel that you put too much of your money in that category at the start.

Many of you buy for at least three or four month's supply and this is completely needless. Every large manufacturer of golf equipment has warehouses stationed all over the country, so why not use those warehouses to supply you with extra needed merchandise. I would recommend a two months' supply of golf equipment on hand — and no more.

If you find you now allocate one-third of your space to clubs, and bags another one-third, then only the remaining third can be allocated to apparel, which, excluding ball sales, can well account for 60-70 per cent of your total business. By cutting down this equipment space on your floor, you will have room for items that ring the cash register every day — apparel and boutique merchandise.

This type of merchandise is not sold particularly from a professional suggestion on your part. It is fashion goods — and you must *show* fashion to sell. It must be shown in all its beauty in the colors, sizes that it comes in and displayed in a very colorful, coordinated manner. You must budget space for it so you have room for "open selling."

So, study your past season's records. Recall what was over- and what was under-inventoried. Figure out what you could have sold a lot more of *if* you had had it on hand at the time it was needed. Then budget your shop space and set up your displays accordingly.

In the actual buying of merchandise for the coming season, one good, hard rule should be adhered to: You can't mean all things to all people. Take plenty of time buying, but learn to say "No"

to good salesmen whose merchandise does not fit your shop, and does not sell. *This is the first thing a store buyer is taught.* Don't feel you have to give a little business to everyone, or buy because the salesman is a "nice guy."

Your statement to the customer when selling merchandise must prove conclusively to him that you feel that this particular item was the best. You do this by showing you have bought it for your inventory and have stocked it deep in colors and sizes.

Your biggest store in town would never have over one supplier's \$100 suit of clothes. It feels that this particular brand of clothing in its price range is the best that money can buy. As a matter of fact, these stores fight for the exclusive right to sell this product in the town. In many cases, they have to show their merchandising ability to be able to buy it for their store.

In buying men's and women's apparel for the pro shop the same holds true. You have to be able to tell your customer which, in your opinion, is the best \$10 shirt for your male members or the best \$15 pair of shorts for your lady members. Again, you prove this by showing that this is what you've got in stock on the floor in a variety of sizes and colors — all in that manufacturer's brand name.

If you do this, you'll be following the successful merchandising methods of the retail giants — and they should know. When they need a fine Orlon shirt for \$10 they seek the best for that price. Having settled on the supplier for service, they boost the supplier's name to the customer, by all-out promotion and teaching their sales staff to tell the customer that this shirt is the best \$10 Orlon shirt made. *This is the only thing they will buy in*

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continued

that price range of goods.

In contrast, the pro will all too often pick four \$10 Orlon shirts from four different suppliers. He buys a small amount from each of them, in the three or four best-selling colors, and all "in the middle." He then has no range of colors or sizes and he cannot say "this is the best \$10 shirt made," because he has four of them displayed to the customer!

The pro buys and sells golf clubs the same way. He often has 10 different brands on display. The customer goes to the pro feeling that the pro should *know* all about golf equipment. When the pro leaves the choice to the customer, it's confusing to the man who doesn't know. Also, by displaying all these clubs, the pro gives the impression that the clubs are going to be sold pricewise, or bargained for. The results is thrown-away sales.

The pro must *mean* something to his member as regards the products he sells. As regards golf equipment, he is likely to be on some manufacturer's staff. In my estimation, this is where he should put the bulk of his buying.

Look at it this way. You are playing that particular product. You know it's the best that money can buy. This is what your customer wants to hear from you—complete assurance that the product is the best. Take him to the practice tee and prove it to him there.

You unquestionably want to have on hand a certain number of other famous manufacturers' products, but this should be done with token buying only, to show the models that are available.

The same holds true in your shoe program. What you feel is the best buy for

your member is what you definitely should lay in thick and heavy. You cannot afford to buy a run of sizes on a certain shoe that someone in the past asked for and which you didn't have. Take the path of proven success — stock deeply what your members like and what you like.

Above all in buying, "beware of Greeks bearing gifts." This is an out and out offer of consignment by certain suppliers who unquestionably have found out that their merchandise cannot be sold at the regular price and on the terms that best — selling merchandise is offered to you.

What this firm is asking you to do is to sell their merchandise for them — they have no success on their own. They want to use up your precious display space. This is very poor business on your part. These people should be experts on selling that merchandise. Yet, they fail. How can you expect to do it successfully for them — and why should you?

Let me strongly urge you, in conclusion, to stay in business the year round. Consider very strongly taking in one-third of your purchases, both equipment and apparel, in time for Christmas business. This, of course, applies to the northern areas and not to those areas open 12 months a year which should take all their merchandise in at the earliest time possible. The northern accounts should take in the other two-thirds of their purchases no later than February 1. I feel that you can increase your business 20 per cent by doing this.

Also, don't forget the tremendous business of the customer going away to play in the winter. If you've got the latest in equipment and fashions, he'd rather buy it all from you. ●