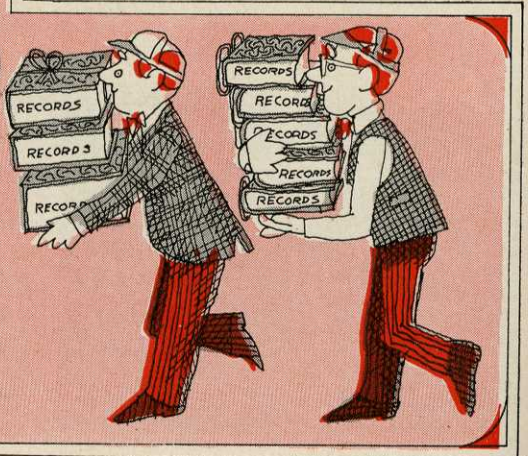




# The rule of seven

By taking a long, hard look at his business from Personnel to Public Relations, the professional can uncover the problem areas that need correcting.

By HARRY OBITZ and DICK FARLEY  
GOLFDOM Merchandising Consultants



## Review this season to plan for next

One of the keys to our success has been a review of the past season for ways in which we can improve our over-all operating procedure.

After the busy season is over, and the results are in, both good and bad, we always take a few days—find a quiet hide-away—and armed with the records of the past season, which are still fresh in our minds, we plan for next year's operation.

It has been our experience that if we delay this review too long, events of the past year become hazy and out of focus and it becomes difficult to recall exactly what did happen.

To better organize our thinking, we break down our operation into seven general categories which we explore one by one for ways to do a better job next year:

**1) Personnel** — Were they right for the operation? In reviewing the past season, it became evident that our gross sales had fallen for no apparent reason. However, upon close examination of our personnel, we found we were top heavy with teaching and playing professionals who, mostly, did not have a flair for selling.

The next year we replaced one of these professionals with a person who was skilled in the art of merchandising as well as being skillful in the game. Our now better balanced operation moved ahead in sales that year.

**2) Merchandising** — Each year we research the market for next year's models, styles, fabrics etc., and we study new merchandising methods. The manufacturers make this study and plan their lines as much as two years ahead so that a letter to a vice president in charge of sales usually will bring an immediate and accurate description of the products they

are coming out with. We use this first hand information for future buying.

Salesmen are another good source of information. They know every trick for pushing the sales of their product. Also, a private chat with the sales manager of our area's leading stores is always profitable because they are trained in the most modern sales techniques.

**3) Teaching Programs** — Every year we up-grade our teaching programs in the simplest way. We have movies taken of us going through our teaching routine. A full staff meeting is called and attention is focused on the changes and improvements in teaching techniques and rule changes.

**4) Service To Members** — Again, movies are taken of our operation in action. The club service department is shot during the normal routine of everyday business; For example, the cleaning and storage of clubs and the handling of bags to and from the first tee and the parking lot. We also take pictures of the starters doing their job on busy days and the registration and sales staff during peak business hours and slow periods. The golf car operation comes under the eye of the camera from the car shed until the member leaves the first tee.

All the films are shown to our entire staff at a special staff meeting. Every member of the staff is encouraged to speak up when improvement can be made, regardless of which department is under the discussion. We do not permit criticism as such, but rather ask that all opinions be in the nature of constructive improvements, based on facts.

**5) Public Relations** — Our public relations program is twofold. The first is

*continued on next page*

## Pro's Rule of Seven

*continued from preceding page*

the golf staff's association with the membership, which includes proper attitude and definition of responsibility in working with all club officials and committee members.

The second is the golf staff's conduct and the impression it gives when it is away from the club. This includes scheduling of appearances at public functions, working with sports-minded groups, keeping commitments with press, radio, and television media, and participating in tournaments and exhibitions. The clue here is that we make ourselves available and known to golf-minded people.

**6) Equipment** — Must it be replaced and modernized? A search into our operating records revealed startling facts. We did not have on hand one single piece of equipment we used ten years ago. Yet, we still used some of the same basic equipment over a set period of time.

For example, our club-cleaning machines are depreciated by the straight line depreciation method and replaced with new machines. The same procedure is true of shop fixtures, furniture, carpets, etc., in fact, everything that can be depreciated and replaced.

We constantly add equipment as it proves itself in the business world. In 1946, we started using a dictaphone and updated this machine when more sophisticated equipment became available. Last year, we bought three of the most modern units available in order that every department would have its own.

Our entire operation is connected by an intercom system which now enables us to get things done in a hurry rather than our old "walk-from-pillar-to-post method." The result has shown greater efficiency. We will standardize this procedure in all future operations.

A call to your local telephone business office should result in their sending an expert out to analyze your needs and bring you up to date on various new systems that are available. Many times a

surprisingly low cost item will produce tremendous results.

Walkie-talkie sets are a must with us, and are used to great advantage where mobility is a factor. For example, our golf course superintendent is never out of touch with the pro shop regardless of his location on the course. The same is true of our golf course rangers and starters. The price of these sets is minimal when compared with the results they produce. Information about these units can be obtained from good radio or TV stores.

A final word about equipment—our motto is, "Take good care of your equipment and it will take good care of you." We also believe in modernizing equipment at every opportunity. This proved to be the economical way over a long period of time.

**7) Profit and Loss** — At the end of every quarter, our auditor and tax consultant is boss. We have our P&L figures broken down and carefully studied. This keeps us from making the same stupid mistakes all year long. Where changes are indicated, we make them.

At the end of the year, we have four separate reports to analyze, and from them, we derive our annual report. We are then able to outline the next year's financial program with utmost accuracy.

We take this same report, have copies made, and distribute them to our entire staff at our special year-end staff meeting. We then go over the figures with them in detail so that they will have a clearer picture of the operation.

This year-end review of our operations has been a constant procedure with us for many years. Every year, we discover problem areas and ways to improve them. Here are some of the problems we discovered and corrected from previous year-end staff meetings. These are again broken down into the seven general categories.

**1) Personnel** — This area was found to be satisfactory in every way except one. The exception was personal appearance of the male staff. This was corrected by our supplying each of our staff with

*continued on page 58*

## Club Manager's ABC's

*continued from page 56*

As you sit down to plan your budgets for 1968, or to meet with your new committees, planning the activities of the coming season, you will find these notes beneficial and enlightening both to yourself and the members involved.

Not only can your committees be confronted with the problems of creating activities, but they can be made cognizant of costs and past results which may encourage or deter their thoughts concerning certain activities.

Budgets may be determined based on what actually happens during specific times, under certain conditions; as well as recognition of some of the factors which could help or hinder adherence to these budget guides.

New activities might be created to fill in some of the "peaks and valleys" in your operations and therefore better utilize your basic staff. Some traditional activities might be eliminated when shown

to be non-profitable. Part-time and "extra" help may be utilized to a greater degree of economy and efficiency, and "swing men" may be integrated into your various departments.

None of the aforementioned things can or will make you a successful club manager. However, many of them will make you a more knowledgeable, efficient and "thinking" manager. The recognition of your problems and their identification is the first step toward solving them. •

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## Pro's Rule of Seven

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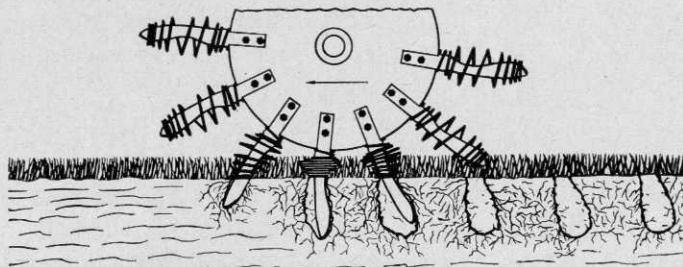
two blazers complete with club crest, and shirts and ties to match. The time and place for wearing this apparel was agreed upon by all. The result in staff appearance *and morale was terrific!*

2) **Merchandising** — This area was found to be weak in the area of our approach to the customer. We paid a sales expert to conduct a clinic for our staff on

*continued on page 60*

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## Pro's Rule of Seven

*continued from page 58*

the fine points of selling. His fee for the three hour clinic was \$100.

Our sales volume in standard items alone (balls, gloves, clubs, bags and shoes) showed better than a 20 per cent increase this season. We attributed this increase to our better approach to our customers.

3) **Teaching Program** — While this seemed adequate, we decided to experiment. We purchased a 16mm movie camera and projector. A program of filming our members was instituted on Sundays. These films were shown at a golfer's club party early in the season and the faults of various golfers were pointed out. The net

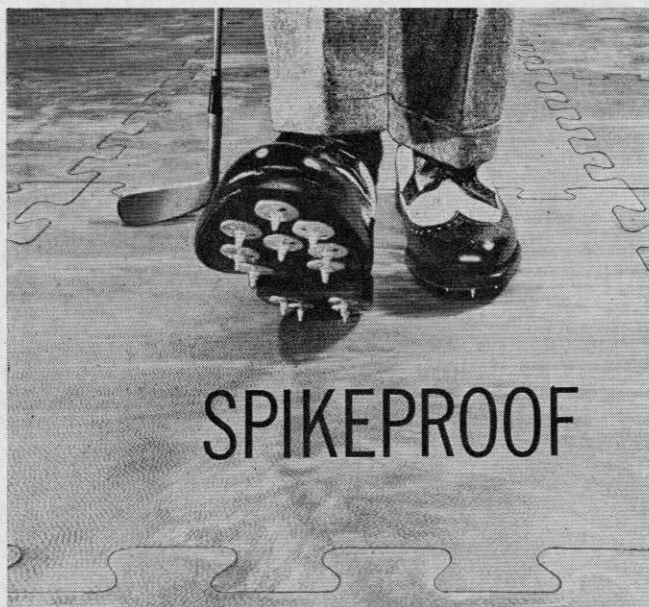
result was a hefty increase in lessons.

4) **Service to Members**—Here, all departments were judged satisfactory. We added a gift shipping service for this year. Results at this time are below expectations because of some unforeseen complications. We will continue it for another six months and then reevaluate the entire operation.

5) **Public Relations** — This area was quite satisfactory. Our only effort to improve was to give each member of our staff a copy of Dale Carnegie's, "How to Win Friends and Influence People," and make this required reading.


6) **Equipment**—All equipment was in good condition and adequate except the

*continued on page 62*



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## Pro's Rule of Seven

continued from page 60

ladies' rental sets. Because of the increased enthusiasm for golf by the women players, we found that we were too many times short of these rentals. This was quickly remedied by purchasing 15 additional complete sets, five each from three different manufacturers.

7) **Profit and Loss** — Results, here, were good. Gross profits and net profits were up. However, in order that we not become complacent, we asked our auditing and legal departments to work closer and give us some additional guidance in the areas of current depreciation and taxation methods. This has been a real eye-opener for us.

We, therefore, cannot stress enough how important we feel that this year-end examination of the past season is in planning for the next. For us, it has paid off handsomely—in bigger profits, and better service to our members. ●

## Management Accents

continued from page 14

In this day of packaged art and electronic stencils even the standard mimeograph machine can produce attractive, eye-catching messages. But you must plan ahead.

5) **Inspire!**—Use action verbs; good, colorful descriptive words and phrases. Avoid a static layout. Dull, uninspired headlines do not make people want to do things. Even the best writers seek new, unique ways to present their work.

The next time you begin to wonder whether the time and effort you've been putting in, trying to get the message across to the members has been worthwhile and the next time you think about packing your bag and moving on — remember this—it may be the message, not the member, that is at fault.

Take a look at *your message*. Are you really communicating with everyone the very best you can? ●

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