

# It's almost as easy as ABC

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**By channeling his thoughts into Activities, Business and Conditions the manager can dig out important data vital to next year's success.**

In the fall, one is reminded of the tail gunner on a World War II bomber who stated, "I never know where I am going, but I sure know where I have been."

Yes, as the season draws to a close in a country club, the manager finds himself in complete agreement with the gunner, for it is then we finally find where we have gone, how rough the trip was, what obstacles were met in our journey, and what kind of a landing we made.

For many, 1967 was a season of rising labor costs, unusual food costs, influencing weather conditions, and in some cases resistance to rising prices.

Many of us threw up our hands in disgust as the season progressed, and in the interest of "member satisfaction" decided to give the best quality possible, employ whomever was obtainable, and raise our prices as much as members would accept.

We now find as we enter the last quarter of the year that this might have made for outward "smooth flying," while encountering anxious moments as we went along. But like some of the airlines who advertise "fly now, and pay later," there comes a time for the final accounting.

With many of these things still fresh in your mind, would not now be a good time to record your problems, obstacles, weather encounters, and equipment opera-

tions? Call it what you may, "De-Briefing," "Post-Mortem," or "Memoirs," it becomes the collecting of information which could be valuable in the future.

If you wait until the snow has fallen, get the holiday season out of the way, and complete your vacation . . . you may find this information is not fresh in your mind, has lost its impact and importance, or has escaped you entirely. With activities lessening, and becoming more of a weekend concentration, take a few moments now to gather this important data, for it might become very valuable to you in just a few more months.

This could be a simple matter and we could over-simplify it by saying: "It's as easy as A-B-C;" if you channel your thoughts into the areas of *Activities, Business, and Conditions*.

*Activity:* As you review your 1967 operations, activity becomes one of the most important points to ponder. When you prepared your budgets in 1966 for this year, what amount of activity were you expecting? Did it meet your expectations? Was it less than anticipated or just what you expected? Take the time now to go through your daily reservation book and decide if luncheon and dinner business were what you had hoped for. If they were not, determine what effected

your projections in comparison with what actually happened.

Perhaps the entertainment committee felt there had been too many parties in 1966 and members wanted more "open nights" during this year? Check now to see if lost attendance from parties was made up by member usage on these new nights, or see if parties are necessary to fully utilize the staff and facilities.

Maybe the situation was reversed in your club and you received a number of member complaints about crowded conditions on week-ends resulting from a large number of social functions.

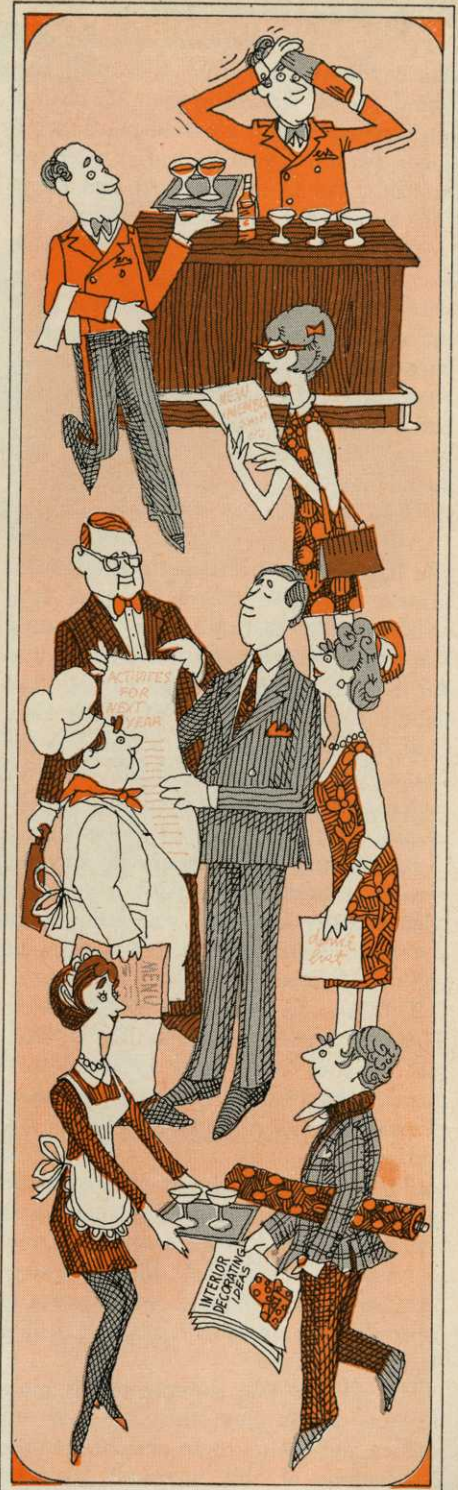
Were too many guests present? Were those special ladies' day luncheons as heavily attended in April and May as you might have liked, or did the children coming home at noon for lunch cause them to play only nine and head for home? Did you notice an increase in attendance at functions after the kids departed for their camps?

Was your male golf confined to week-ends in the early part of the season and then suddenly jumped up during the Decoration Day to Labor Day period? Or was it the reverse, and the "boss" played during the off season, and filled in for key men in his organization as summer vacations created a need for his presence during the week?

A look at the reservation book, the guest register and the calendar may provide you with this information and notes can be taken which might help in your planning for 1968. A look at the club social calendar could also reveal some interesting facts. You might find that someone had the idea to "hold off" the social activities until Decoration Day and the members did not begin to "use" the club until the season opened socially. But you might have had an early opening party and found that they began to use the club earlier due to this "rushing of the new season."

Maybe you held a large formal dinner

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## Club Managers' ABC's

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dance the night before the qualifying round for all classes in the club championship; and found you had poor attendance? Most of your potential attendees probably had to tee off early and therefore departed earlier than normal.

You might find that a brunch went over well on the morning of a husband-wife mixed two-ball event because both ma and pa were able to eat together. Perhaps your 5 P.M. shift on Mother's Day went practically unattended where you had overflows on the 6 and 7 P.M. reservations. It is also possible you had poor attendance on the Saturday night dances prior to the three day weekends.

A trip to the pro shop may disclose that you had good car revenue in the months prior to and after school vacations. It is also possible that the pro practically "starved" for lessons until those vacations for the kids began, and then he could not handle some of them until Labor Day. Golf ball sales may have increased as the course became more crowded, and the merchandise sales had exceptional increases near Mother's Day and Father's Day.

All of these things are worthy of note, and if one makes up a *blank calendar* of what *actually happened*, forgetting what you had planned or expected to happen, you may discover some revealing facts.

Turning now to "B" we find *Business*: This is a simple matter, entailing an analysis of your daily sales in all departments. If you utilize a daily report sheet this information is practically at your fingertips. Scrutinizing a daily sales journal could cause more work, but even a monthly statement will help to find out where your business *did* or *did not come from*.

An analysis of *Business* during the summer months contributes to some degree in controlling rising labor costs and filling the labor shortage.

We all feel that summer means more business at the club; then we gear our kitchen and dining room personnel to the expectations of this increased business.

But an analysis of *what increases* our business helps in the areas mentioned.

If you do exceptional business on your Sunday night buffets, would the addition of a "mid-week" or second buffet night increase your business even more?

You may find that your breakfast business is insufficient to pay for the breakfast cook and waitresses necessary to serve it. A buffet of sweet rolls, juices on ice, melon pieces and hot coffee may be all they want, and you would use less help.

Some clubs have found that a "do-it-yourself" coffee bar with trays of sweet rolls in the locker room, utilizing an honor system for signing checks eliminates all but one person in serving the early morning golfers before he tees off.

You might also find that your business increased only because of summer facilities that are used such as cabanas, snack bars, half-way houses and the outdoor patio bar. Closer checking may reveal that you actually had a decrease in your grill and main dining rooms at luncheon time due to these facilities or that locker room buffet you serve on weekends. A similar check of your individual guest checks may reveal that the "check average" falls drastically as lighter and cooler foods appear on your menus, and while you do less dollar volume, you need more help.

Finding out "how you obtained the business" can be almost as important as "how much business" you did. Checks should be made as to breakfast, luncheon, dinner, buffet, snack bar, half-way house and other food and bar revenues so that you know where you are really doing the business.

Some departments may be just "convenience centers" for keeping the kids out of the clubhouse and are actually subsidized by the club; while your golfers may be contributing some good profits through their patronage of the half-way house which requires a minimal staff, but sells to almost everyone on the course.

"C" as in *Conditions* becomes another important and significant factor in our post-season analysis. What about the

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GOLFDOM

## Club Manager's ABC's

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weather during the past season? Was it an early spring, late summer, rainy year or exceptionally hot? Weather is probably the number one influence in country club operations, but there are others just as important.

Did you find that you had to replace the chef in mid-July? Maybe you changed meat purveyors just before the season began? Office personnel was "short," so announcements did not always go out on time. A new head locker man may not have gotten all the checks for greens fees, or did you not realize until late June that the new waitresses were not charging for desserts or beverages. These may have been contributing conditions to operations during the past season.

Notes might also be made as to how well various orchestras were received by the membership. Were "casual" affairs better attended than the dressier parties? Did the new air conditioning system increase

attendance in the dining room? Have you served more ladies luncheons since increasing the parking lot? Has the creation of a teen-age committee brought new activities for the calendar of events?

We might even go further in the alphabet and add the letter "E", letting this denote *Equipment*. Notes should be made as to needs for new equipment and replacements. If the vacuum cleaner "conked out" in the locker room and you loaned them one from another location, make a note of it. If you had many rentals of equipment on "peak" days, jot down the costs of such rentals and how frequently they occur.

Some record should also be kept of extra labor needed on your busy nights which was necessitated due to lack of ample equipment such as glassware, china, and serving utensils.

Now that we have refreshed our memories, made notes of our past problems, and assembled operational data, it is time to put it to use.

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## Club Manager's ABC's

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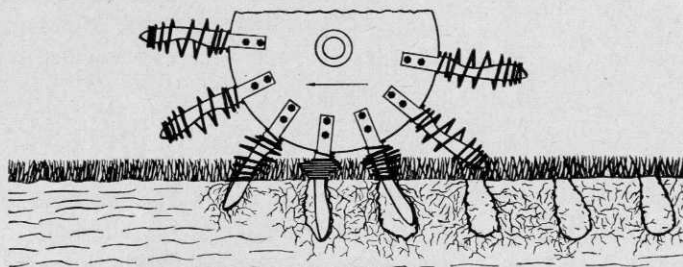
two blazers complete with club crest, and shirts and ties to match. The time and place for wearing this apparel was agreed upon by all. The result in staff appearance *and morale was terrific!*

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

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