

Retailers, suppliers show pros how to sell

Enthusiasm high on one-day seminar by Ernie Sabayrac Associates and PGA

By Desmond Tolhurst

Senior Editor

The one-day golf shop merchandising seminar put on in New York by Ernie Sabayrac and his suppliers* in cooperation with the national PGA turned out a smash hit. Held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, the recent affair attracted 325 professionals, who came in from as far afield as California, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois. The pros' enthusiasm to attend such business meetings augers well for their becoming fixtures on the golf business calendar.

After Max Elbin, president of the PGA, gave the welcoming address, Vincent Draddy, president of David Crystal, Inc., talked about the supplier's viewpoint. Draddy pointed out that the pro's best interests are also the supplier's best interests. "Never forget," he said, "that the supplier is there to make money for you."

Harold Krensky, chairman of the board, Bloomingdale's, then exhorted the pros to carry the same professionalism they employ on the teaching tee into the golf shop. There is no great mystique about the art of merchandising, he said, but like every other occupation, it must be carried out with enthusiasm to succeed. If you're really interested, you'll quickly learn what is necessary to buy and sell successfully.

The pros' ace in the hole, Krensky maintained, was that their customers—the club members—are already pre-sold on buying in the pro shop. They are a captive audience that, in today's affluent society,

will enable the pro to enjoy many years of good sales growth. In contrast, stores have to spend millions in order to gain the confidence of their clientele.

The topic of "Open-to-buy" was tackled by Edward Martin, vice president, J.P. Maguire & Co. This system enables you to avoid over or under-buying in any department of your shop, plus it helps prevent being out of stock of that fast-selling item.

What you do, Martin said, is get together with your accountant and, by reference to your past years' sales figures, work out upper dollar limits on desired inventory in all departments of your shop, such as clubs, balls, shirts, hats, etc. This guides your buying so that you open the season at the inventory level you think best for all items. During the season, it also serves as a warning to you on when current inventory is low and when it's time to re-order.

Martin also emphasized the importance of establishing and protecting your credit rating. Making a personal friend of a banker who is a member of your club is the ideal way to do this. After all, a club member is in an excellent position to see the business potential of your shop. Just as vital is to keep in contact with your creditors. If, for any reason, you can't pay a bill right now, write a letter explaining the reasons for this.

Ernie Sabayrac covered the topic, "The executive professional." Don't try and do everything yourself, he said. Analyze your job in terms of the functions to be performed, such as lessons, shop management, public relations, golf promotion, committee work. Then, see to it that you have the staff to fulfill them.

For instance, you must have an

accountant, a banker and a staff second to none. You will sell clubs, of course, but you should take the executive approach to apparel. Most pros must have an expert in apparel on the floor of the shop. Selling apparel is not a job for an amateur and, in relation to this, consider getting a mature, experienced gal to handle this for you.

As regards clubs, Ernie pointed out that no member will buy a set of clubs unless he thinks that it will improve his game. Here, the professional approach to selling is vital. Take the member out on the practice tee and bring along a bundle of clubs of different shaft flexes and swingweights. Let the member convince himself that the clubs you prescribe enable him to hit the ball better with less effort.

Selling clubs from the profes-



Ernie Sabayrac was instrumental in making the seminar the success it was.

* Ernie Sabayrac Associates are: Brockton Footwear, Inc. (Foot-Joy and Ben Hogan Shoes), David Crystal, Inc. (Izod and Haymaker), Coberknit Corp., Croston of Boston, Esquire Sportswear Mfg. Corp., Fabergé, Flip-It, Inc., Liebert Cravats and Varela Slacks.



"Bud" Werring (above), west coast sales manager for Ernie Sabayrac, gave a talk on men's sportswear, utilizing display set-up on stage.

Max Elbin, president of the PGA, presented the welcoming address. Some 325 pros attended the affair which was held at the Waldorf-Astoria.

sional standpoint, said Sabayrac, is the only way to go. The member will have faith in your prescription for clubs to improve his game, when he can see how much better he can hit the ball than with his current set. And, price is no object. Such satisfied customers, too, will be your best salesmen.

Be an executive also, advised Ernie, in analyzing your market and the potential sales that can be expected from a member.

Research shows that the average member will buy a set of woods, irons and a golf bag every three years. On the top quality equipment and a bag at \$80, this would come out at around \$350, or a little under \$120 a year. In apparel, the average member will buy; one pair of shoes at an average price of \$30; six pairs of two dollar socks (\$12); three pairs of \$15 slacks (\$45); two pairs of \$10 shorts (\$20); six shirts at \$6 (\$36); one \$20 sweater; one \$15 golf jacket and three hats or caps (\$9) for a grand total of \$187.

The moral is obvious, said Sabayrac. Make money every day, not every three years. If you were to wait that long to eat, you would be darned hungry!

Be an executive in your treatment of your staff. Make certain that they have a fair basic salary, and

give them a commission on what they sell personally. As head professional, your duties will take you out of the shop on many occasions during the business day. Giving your staff an adequate incentive will ensure they sell as hard when you're out as when you are personally supervising the shop.

The next speaker was Mac Lewis, president, Esquire Sportswear Mfg. Corp., who dealt with men's sportswear. He emphasized that your members want to buy from you if you want to sell. You have a lot going for you. Your customers are built in and affluent. You don't have to pay for radio and TV ads and no hard sell is necessary. However, you can't sell from an empty wagon.

To get an idea of what to fill your wagon with, ask yourself these questions: 1. Are my members fashion conscious or are they on the conservative side? 2. What colors appeal to them? 3. Who are the fashion leaders at my club and what can I do to get them on my side? Another approach is to take a survey of your member's sizes. A simple form in every member's locker will do the trick, and the range of sizes revealed can be of inestimable value in figuring your purchases.

The right image will do much to

sell your male members on fashion. It's mandatory for success that you dress the part yourself, creating the desire in your members to go to that first tee looking "just like the pro." It goes without saying that you should only wear apparel available in your shop.

Lewis also discussed some of the techniques of selling apparel to men. Many men have no idea what color, style, solid or stripe, etc., looks good on them. *Don't let them select badly in color or fit.* (If you are out of a size, ask the customer if you can order it for him.) There's bound to be someone who will let them know the apparel you've allowed them to buy looks bad on them.

Of the utmost importance, said Lewis, is the look of the shop. Give your shop a definite "look" that fits in with the rest of the club. Engage a professional trimmer so that you get the most mileage out of your apparel investment.

Another area where professionalism will pay off is in the presentation of the garment to the customer. If you let a customer choose slacks or a jacket himself, he is struggling all the way and is in the wrong mood to buy. Learn how to pick up a jacket, almost fondle it. "Romance" the item so that the

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Retailers show pros

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customer, seeing your attitude, will realize what a fine piece of merchandise he's getting. Never take out one pair of slacks. Take out five or six pairs, lay them out on a table, mentally working out coordinating items at the same time that you will show a little later. You may sell three out of the five slacks this way.

All the best stores present garments to you in a professional manner as standard operating procedure. Much can be learned by studying their methods next time you are shopping.

Bud Werring, Ernie Sabayrac, Inc., then gave a live demonstration of these techniques of presenting garments to the customer. He and Don Drotman, Izod, engaged in a spirited and amusing skit that showed that if "you talk slow and move fast" you can sell a member his entire spring season's golf wardrobe in about ten minutes! Seriously, though, Bud and Don did a great job of showing how, as the customer looks at the slacks, the pro can keep talking and gather up half a dozen shirts to coordinate with the various slacks, sell them, then move on to blazers, socks, shoes and even ties.

Of course, you have to know when to stop! But if you don't even give it a try, then you'll never know if you would have encountered sales resistance.

At lunch the featured speaker was Jerry Jontry, senior vice president, *ESQUIRE* Magazine. Jontry's address on "The force of fashion" yielded a barrel of laughs as well as many interesting golf apparel marketing facts.

Ernie Sabayrac got things going again after lunch with a stimulating talk on buying. Learn how to say "No" to salesmen who call on you, advises Ernie. Pros are just too nice most of the time and buy from far too many salesmen. However, because their buying budget must have a limit, they land up, for instance, with four 5-dollar knit shirts, all in medium and large, and all in the same colors, from four different suppliers.

All you're doing with this method

Continued on next page

News of the industry

One-day symposium

A symposium on dead spot of bermuda will be held at the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia on June 11 at 8:00 pm.

It will be preceded by a field trip which will start at Capitol City Country Club, Atlanta, Georgia.

Nationwide clinics

Harley-Davidson Motor Company is conducting a series of field service clinics throughout the country. Last month at the Milwaukee Holiday Inn West, Milwaukee area golf course and country club personnel, along with local Harley-Davidson dealers, received instruction on the latest factory maintenance techniques.

Warren expands distribution

The Rocky Ledge Farm and Nursery has been appointed New England distributor for Warren Turf Nurseries, growers of lawn sod with nurseries in the New York, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and California areas. They will distribute sod, lawn food and other Warren products.

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Retailers show pros

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is buying close-out material! Select your suppliers with care, Sabayrac advises, and stock deep in their merchandise only. If a member happens to want a shirt from a company that is not one of your suppliers, then that's one sale you can't afford to make.

The afternoon session continued with a talk on shoes by James Petcoff, James Petcoff Assoc. Fit and comfort, he said, come before brand and price with most people when it comes to shoes. If you can fit them, you can sell them.

Be able to fit from inventory, and only display what you have in stock. It makes no sense to stock heavily in a certain shoe and then display a single sample shoe you don't stock.

Other merchandising tips Petcoff gave were: never buy the same style of shoe in two brands—it shows the customer that you couldn't make up your mind; show shoes with apparel as well as in the display in the shoe department; always come back to the customer with two pairs of shoes, not one—the customer then has to decide which to buy, not whether to buy or not; always make the member try the shoe on first, before telling him the size—if he knows the size he may reject the shoe before trying it on.

Boutique items are one of the newest things recently introduced into the pro shop. Jim White, of Fabergé, discussed some of the new items now available for men. These included "natural look" hair preparations, hard-milled soap that lasts three times as long as regular soap, body colognes, after-shave conditioners and, face conditioners with that tanned look effect.

In selling these items, White said that you must have the selling points at your finger tips—as with selling any item. For instance, selling after-shave balm might seem like a tough sell—especially when you know that after-shave lotion is available in the lockerroom. However, regular after-shave burns the face and, though men have gotten used to this over the years, new after-shave balms soothe the face and prevent shave rash.

To simplify the selling of men's

toiletries in the shop there are display units available that take up little floor space.

The next item on the agenda was a talk by Mrs. Karin Gostowski, "Gal in the pro shop" at Riviera CC, Coral Gables, Fla., where Buck Luce is the professional.

Karin emphasized that the word "sell" has to be defined carefully in relation to selling the women on your golf apparel. It means, of course, knowing your merchandise and using every means—such as apparel salesmen, ads, retail shop visits—to improve that knowledge. It also means that saying "May I help you" is no longer enough. Pick up the item and show them the item personally.

Girls will always ask "what's new?" So Karin always makes it a point to have something new to show every week. Of course, you can also give the impression of "something new" by judicious moving around of merchandise.

Service is the key word with the women. Competition is keen and by all means offer alterations, package wrapping, monogramming and other services that the customer can get elsewhere.

Mrs. Gostowski then showed how she would sell "Miss Duffer" who had just come to the club for her first lesson.

In the course of the skit, Karin observed that if women can't make up their minds on selection, then she will step in and suggest what she thinks is best. A lot of women, too, rely on their husbands to make the final decision. Here, it's good business to let them take both outfits home. Often, you'll sell both!

Karin said that of course it's important for the "girl in the shop" to wear what's available in the shop. But, equally important, she must not overdress. She said that she always underplays her own outfits, so that her lady customer—and not she—will be the "star."

"Your silent partner—fixtures and display" was the theme of the next talk by Edwin Parrotte, design director, Golf Inc. Parrotte said that the modern retailer utilizes specialists in every field of merchandising—a layout man, a fixture man, etc. "We are now in busi-

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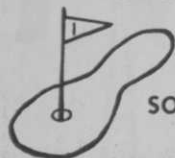
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ness," said Parrotte, "to serve the pro in the same way." (Catalogs will soon be available on this new service.)

Ernie Sabayrac wound up the day by emphasizing that "You must have a sale." Many pros, he said, consider that holding a sale is below the dignity of a pro shop. This is wrong, because every store, including the finest around, hold sales. It's the only way to stay in business.

Every pro shop, Ernie said, has loyal customers, who make up, say, 25% of the total membership. That means there are 75% on which you are missing out.

Make no mistake about it. This "sale" customer is valuable. First, he is paying you good money for your buying mistakes! Also, when he buys a sale item from you, he is buying a fine brand of merchandise. He will note the name, be satisfied with the item, and when your new season's goods come in, it's likely that he won't be able to wait until your next sale. Presto, you have a new full markup customer.

A pro should hold two sales a year, said Sabayrac. Your fall line should be put on sale before your spring merchandise is put on display, between April 1 and May 15. Your spring and summer merchandise sale should not begin before August first and should be ended right after Labor Day.

In sales timing, there is one all-important consideration. The customer. He has to have the opportunity to wear the apparel right away.

The sales dates suggested take care of this. Fall merchandise can still be enjoyed in April and early May before the heat comes. And, similarly, there is plenty of good weather between August 1 and Labor Day for the member to enjoy lightweight apparel.

At the cocktail party that immediately followed the seminar, all the professionals agreed that this had been a great innovation in pro business education. Hopefully, by next year this idea pioneered by Ernie Sabayrac and his suppliers can be put on a permanent basis. □

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