

Put a Fashion Show in Your 1972 Plans

A fashion show is one of the best ways to promote new stock and attract potential customers into the pro shop. Here is a step-by-step guide to conducting a successful fashion show

By Jean Conlon



David Crystal's publicity director Michele Abruzzo narrates a well-rounded fashion show featuring childrenswear.

So you're going to give a pro shop fashion show . . . and you don't really know where to begin. Just the thought of all the preparatory work seems overwhelming, so chances are you'll shelve the whole idea and put it off for another year. But did you ever consider that the pro shop fashion show you're so easily, thoughtlessly giving up could mean a difference in this year's final sales figures? Well, GOLFDOM did and therefore decided to pass along to you some concrete suggestions on how to give a pro shop fashion show, step-by-step. They're easy to follow and hopefully

will eliminate some of the pre-show panic which often admittedly sets in any time a professional embarks on such a venture. The following results have been carefully researched through interviews with top golfwear manufacturers, distributors and several professionals who have already given successful pro shop fashion shows.

Where to begin: From the beginning, *get assistance.* Many professionals are unaware that manufacturer salesmen like to help their favorite professionals put together a fashion show. Take advantage of personal and pro-

fessional friendships with salesmen and ask them to help. Or, quite often the pro shop distributors are more than happy to be of some assistance. Ernie Sabayrac, for example, invites professionals to ask him, or one of his 32 salesmen, for help, according to a recent article which appeared in the August issue of "Carriage Trade News": "We do feel that we have a vast amount of 'stored' up knowledge which might help you to come up with a solution to your problem," fashion shows included. Although distributors do not normally get involved with the actual fashion show itself, they are willing, as Sabayrac is, "to direct the pro to the right people and manufacturers who will make sure the merchandise needed gets to the pro on time."

When to begin: Don't think "fashion show, that's a good idea" and then expect it to miraculously materialize the very next day or even the next week. No, fashion shows take a lot more time than you initially think. It is agreed among the sophisticated pro shop merchandisers that planning a fashion show, although not difficult, is timely. For example, golf professional Fred Philipps of the Riverton CC in Riverton, N.J., started working on his fashion show in January and set the date for early spring, around April. He thereby eliminated the possibility of uncomfortably tight merchandise deliveries of the necessary garments he had to have on hand for the show and extra stock for after-show sales, plus he gave himself the distinct advantage of doing a great deal of pre-show publicity. Likewise, generously grant yourself plenty of weeks to prepare the show and allow for any unanticipated snags.

When is a good time: Pros and manufacturers alike feel that a good time for a fashion show is in conjunction with the Ladies Opening Luncheon. Jack Lust, vice president of DiFini Originals, claims, "For spring styles experience has proven the first Ladies' Day Opening Luncheon is ideal. The best time to start the show is right *after* lunch has been served so as to avoid the noise of rattling dishes." Another helpful hint from Lust: See that the invitation for the fashion show goes out with the invitation to the luncheon. Best yet, ask the club manager or ladies' committee that plans the lunch



Professional Fred Philipps and model-members of Riverton CC schedule fashion shows to coincide with club luncheons.

to send one invitation only announcing both events. That way the show will be guaranteed a bigger turnout than if scheduled as a separate event.

How to prepare merchandise: So often a professional will not have enough of the latest styles in stock for a really special fashion show. However, if a show is readied well enough in advance, as previously suggested, there should be enough time to place special orders with the manufacturers whose merchandise will be modeled in the show. So advises Lust, "Ask your salesman to write up a separate fashion show order which will be expedited with high priority to arrive early in the season."

"But even before ordering," suggests Michele Abruzzo, director of advertising and publicity, David Crystal, Inc., "decide what kind of show it will be and what kind of audience will be attending. If there is a possibility of some men being there with their wives, show menswear; if the audience is filled with grandmothers, be sure to show some children's styles. Grandmothers always love shopping for their grandchildren, so childrenswear in your show will automatically win the audience over!" If the pro shop does not normally stock the little extras needed to spark up a fashion show, Michele advises, "Have local shops (non-competing

ones, of course) participate by lending their furs, childrenswear, accessories, etc., to further enhance your show. As a way of reciprocating, the local shop and its location in town can be announced to the audience before or during the show. They'll welcome the additional publicity."

Once the ordered outfits arrive, start immediately on model fittings. Trudi Montgomery, wife of professional Ray Montgomery, Mill River CC in Upper Brookville, N.Y., tries "to pick the garments to be used according to how well they look on the person modeling them." It will not help to sell the merchandise, if the outfits worn do not look "absolutely right" once out on the runway. But the biggest problem to avoid, fitting-wise, according to professional Philipps, "is not having the correct sizes for your models. It is so very important to make sure plenty of time is set aside for fittings and making proper sizes available."

How to select models: There's a variety of opinions on model selection among manufacturers and professionals. On the one hand, Jack Lust feels the pro should "enlist the support of your ladies' golf committee and let the chairman select the models—three or four girls modeling three outfits or six girls modeling two outfits each will prove adequate." Trudi Montgomery,

on the other hand, does model selection herself. "I take a dozen or so girls from the club membership and ask them to participate in the show. They are always the ones with nice figures, who wear anywhere from a size eight to a size 12." Michele Abruzzo claims, "Women golfers are often slim so why not use the members?" However, members alone should not be the only models. Miss Abruzzo warns, "Do not do an all-amateur show, but be sure to use some professional models." Jack Lust agrees. "It is advisable," he concurs, "to have one professional model or ex-professional model to help carry the show. The candid models who are club members will create greater audience interest and participation." That way, a nice balance of model presentation will be obtained.

What props to use: A runway is a must. If the models walk among the audience, the show will bog down, because the models are often stopped by someone curious enough to touch the fabric of the garment modeled or another who might just want to talk to their model friend. Either have your show on the club's auditorium stage or build a runway at least 18 inches



An elevated runway sets the stage for DiFini fashions.

high. As Michele Abruzzo points out, "That way everyone can easily see all the fashion details. Be sure to have cloth, sheet or carpeting tacked down on the runway surface to avoid unpleasant accidents such as tripping or slipping."

Music is another must. By using
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accompanying music, you will get the audience in the right frame of mind. After all, a fashion show should be remembered as "fun and entertaining," according to Jack Lust, and therefore music helps to create just that right atmosphere. Plus, music "keeps the models moving and the show nice and lively," according to Miss Abruzzo.

Sometimes a microphone is necessary if the room in which the show is held is exceptionally large or your audience is seated far away from the commentator. Have the microphone checked immediately before the commentator goes on stage so that there will be no awkward delays over a "dead" mike.

Narration . . . the who's and how's: Some professionals like to do their own narration, others prefer bringing in an outside MC. Mrs. Montgomery modestly admits, "I myself am not very good at it, so I usually have an outsider do the presentation." To have a visiting commentator, especially someone connected with the golf and fashion industries, often enhances the show's program. Professional Philipps invited the fashion editor of GOLF Magazine to do the narration which was well received by his audience. "But be certain," explains Michele Abruzzo, "that the outside commentator knows the clothes and is acquainted with the audience beforehand." There is nothing worse than a commentator talking to the audience while trying to fumble around for descriptions of the clothes.

The pro should have all the information about the garments modeled written down on individual three by five cards before hand, and should be given to each model just immediately before she goes out on the runway. This method will help avoid panic and confusion, which often occurs when a model shows up out of turn and only information line-up sheets are being used. Remember, the audience must be talked to continually, knowledgeably and informatively.

Tell the audience about the garment *in detail*; never presume every pocket, zipper, button and underskirt culottes can be seen. Talk fabric, colors available, sizes, prices, even suggest how and where the style should be worn. Any fashion information fed the au-

dience will help to sell the merchandise. Then tie it all together with some entertaining anecdote done in a candid manner.

How long the show: Keep the time of the show down to a minimum. A fashion show should not be overly long and therefore possibly boring. The Mill River fashion shows usually run one half hour from beginning to end; Riverton's are about the same; Michele Abruzzo, who puts together very high fashion shows for David Crystal, such as the one done recently at the Hotel Pierre in New York, clocks her shows to run 45 minutes. She allows approximately 45 seconds to a garment, in an average 60 piece show.

The extras: Why not give a door prize or a table gift to the guests? After all, presents add new dimensions to the already expected fashion show format. Fred Philipps gave a golf towel with the club ensigna and ball marker to each of the ladies attending his last year's show. The cost to the professional? Approximately \$1.50 per gift. The DiFinis like to hold an audience participation competition: guess the price of a special DiFini outfit and if right, it's yours! Another idea pointed out by Jack Lust is that many perfume manufacturers are willing to send professionals sample gifts of their products to be given out, with their compliments, to the guests. Or, treat the audience to a glass of champagne with the luncheon. The extras are always well appreciated.

The results: Pro shop fashion shows mean pro shop business. Although the fashion show may not produce immediate sales, it will help to attract the curious browsers, the potential customer. "Right after the show is not the buying period," Trudi Montgomery has found, "but more and more people will come into the shop as a result and become familiar with other merchandise available. In the long run, the show pays . . ." And, goodwill (possibly the best by-product of giving a fashion show) is automatically created. As so well summed up by Miss Abruzzo: "The pro's members will admire him for giving the show and will most likely trust his future judgement that much more in his selection of fashions for his pro shop." It's all about projecting the desirable image of a sophisticated pro shop merchandiser. □

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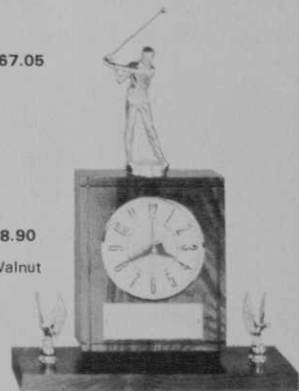


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