

## PLANNING:

# An Oft-Neglected Part Of Pro Shop Business

It's as simple as this: In the retail business, if you don't know where you've been and what you've been doing, before deciding where you should be going next, you won't be going anywhere.

The key to planning for the future is knowing past performance.

You have to check very carefully what and how much merchandise you bought last year, from which supplier; what sold at what price and what didn't sell.

That means you must keep records—good records. They will enable you to come up with the necessary facts to make your planning easier.

Here's the kind of records you should be keeping (last year's sales records, not records of purchases). They should be broken down by 1) manufacturer; 2) classification; 3) price, and 4) what and how much sold at full retail and at markdown.

Start first with the manufacturer in shirts, for example. How many dozens did you buy? How well did they sell? Make a complete evaluation of your dealings with the company. (You may remember being disappointed in not receiving the amount of merchandise you ordered. This doesn't mean you should impetuously cross off that source from your list. Research the problem. Maybe his merchandise was popular, which may explain why it was in short supply. The stuff is good and in demand. That's the kind of fast-selling merchandise you want.) Go on down the list of all your other suppliers and analyze what happened last year.

At a time when pro shop sales could use revitalizing, the author, a veteran merchandiser, re-emphasizes the "how-to's" of planning as insurance against buying mistakes

by ERNIE SABAYRAC

PRESIDENT, ERNIE SABAYRAC, INC. MIAMI, FLORIDA

Another point. Did you buy from too many suppliers last year? Perhaps you should concentrate your buying on sources of proven reliability. A few key companies can more than satisfy your needs. Fringe sources can cause losses as can fringe styles and sizes. This decision, of course, is a critical one, so approach it cautiously.

It's a good idea to call a "junior staff meeting" sometime during the slow part of the day. Put your heads together and study your entire sales operation. What items sold well; what didn't? What didn't you buy enough of? The answers to these questions can be invaluable to you, especially so because you're usually busy outside the shop tending to the other demands made upon you as a professional. It's impossible for you to be familiar with the movement of every item in the shop. Your sales help can fill you in, and should know the answers you'll need to help you plan.

Another way to glean information about past performance: Ask the suppliers. See if the representatives can fill you in on what hap-

pened to their merchandise. If they can't supply you with exact information, maybe they can help by telling you what happened in a shop similar to yours.

#### COUNTING UP

There are numerous methods of taking inventory, but the best system for the average pro shop is the simple monthly check. Use a standard 8 1/2 inch by 11 inch inventory sheet. Separate your merchandise into categories—balls, bags, woods, irons, utility clubs, wedges, putters, men's wear (shirts, slacks, jackets, shorts, shoes, socks) and women's wear (slacks, skirts, shorts, sweaters, shirts and shoes), plus accessories, which include gloves, headcovers and umbrellas, and so on.

When the merchandise arrives, record it on the inventory sheet, along with a description, retail price, cost, percentage of profit, the arrival date and the quantity of the pieces received. Do this each time new merchandise arrives. Once a month, take an inventory to tally up the amount of goods on hand. It's important that this count be taken accurately, so put a responsible person in charge, because there's no sense in doing it if it's not done properly.

Scrutinize daily cash sales and charge sales.

#### PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

After you've gathered as much data as you can about what happened last year, synthesize it so that an over-all pattern emerges. Take one

*continued on page 58*

# COMING EVENTS

CENTRAL PLAINS TURFGRASS FOUNDATION TURF CONFERENCE, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kan., October 17-19.

FLORIDA TURF-GRASS ANNUAL MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE, Pier 66, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., October 21-24.

EIGHTH ANNUAL WISCONSIN GOLF TURF SYMPOSIUM, Pfister Hotel, Milwaukee, Wis., October 24-25.

TURF AND LANDSCAPE DAY, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, Wooster, Ohio, September 11.

MICHIGAN TURFGRASS FIELD DAY, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich., September 13.

TURFGRASS FIELD DAY, Ornamental Horticulture Research Center, Urbana, Ill., September 18.

PROFESSIONAL GROUNDS MANAGEMENT SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING, Wilson Lodge, Ogelbay Park, Wheeling, W. Va., September 19-22.

MIDWEST TURF FIELD DAY, Agronomy Farm and Campus, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind., September 24.

CONGRESS FOR RECREATION AND PARKS, Sheraton Park Hotel, Washington, D.C., September 29-October 4.

13TH ANNUAL TURFGRASS EQUIPMENT & MATERIALS EDUCATIONAL EXPOSITION, Orange County Fairgrounds, Costa Mesa, Calif., October 17-18.

## PLANNING from page 23

classification at a time and analyze the figures.

Jot down comments as you go over the figures, making notes that will help you when the time comes to order new stock. "Sold out of medium and higher priced slacks too early"; "not enough depth in key styles"; "too much money tied up in lower-priced slacks last year" are typical comments.

When you begin to plan your buying, first fill in the colors and sizes on the staple merchandise that you want to receive in your initial delivery. Add up the money you've spent so far, then put that information aside. Now, go to work on the new fashion merchandise, also for early delivery. Add that figure to the figure for staples. Check to see if the total amount is what you planned to spend for your initial delivery.

Before you actually buy the merchandise, make sure you have a complete up-to-date inventory count on everything you own in your shop. With that information, plus the data from last year and the comments from your staff and suppliers, you should be ready to plan your new season's purchases.

It's a good idea to plan your deliveries to come in three stages. First it is easier to pay the bills that way. Also, your shop puts on a new face every time new merchandise is displayed.

Schedule your deliveries as follows: 20 per cent for November 26; 50 per cent for March 1, and 30 per cent for May 1. The first delivery, just before Christmas, should be the order that fills in your supply of basic items, with the sizes and colors you need to round out your inventory, plus a few fashion items to catch the eye of Christmas time shoppers.

All your buying strategy should be worked out by early September. Also be certain to arrange your appointments with your important supplier salesmen from whom you plan to buy heavily. Then, follow up with a visit to the Professional Golfers' Assn. of America Merchandise Show in late January, where you can complete your buying.

Planning for the upcoming season isn't restricted to buying. You

should also evaluate your present sales force. How did each of them perform for you this past year? If some of them didn't do well, you must consider replacing them.

Another thought. Look around your shop as impersonally as you can. If you were a customer, would your shop sell you? Plan how to dress it up and make improvements that will lure customers to your merchandise.

There's another buying angle that also should be mentioned. As you know, or should know, about 25 per cent of your total membership buys at full retail from you. They the cream of your customers, usually the trendsetters, the ones who lead in fashion, the latest equipment, and so on. You are probably well aware of their sizes, their preferences and their golfing needs. Why not plan to order some merchandise especially for them? Some special clubs made only for that certain member. Ordered well ahead of time, almost any manufacturer will produce them for you. And keep quiet about it. Spring the surprise when the clubs arrive. If you're afraid your customers will think you're presumptuous, don't be. They will be extremely flattered that you've been thinking about them, that you've shown so much interest in them and that you've taken the time to order specifically for their needs. You might do the same with a sports jacket or some other item, depending on the member and how well you think you can buy for him. This is the kind of extra effort members appreciate.

Knowing some of the things mentioned here should help you do a better job of planning and preparing for the season ahead. □

*Author's note: This article contains my thoughts, along with those of Ira Neimark, vice president and general merchandise manager of B. Altman, Inc., of New York City (a golf nut and a real friend to his professional), and Leonard Resnick, vice president of Izod, Ltd., and former merchandise manager of Wallachs, a fine group of men's sportswear stores in New York. Thanks for the able assistance, gentlemen!*