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Accent on management

By KEN EMERSON

Executive Director, National Club Association

How can an enterprise operate effectively at the peak of its annual season when its working staff faces a dramatic cut?

This is not the exception, it is the rule for golf clubs all over the country when September brings a new school term and eliminates the labor pool that has been available all summer. School recaptures its student body at the very moment that a combination of good weather and golfing interest combine to tax the club's facilities and staff to the utmost.

Planning for this annual exodus of workers is necessary, and not always successful, though some of the problems it creates are self-solving. Swimming pools for example. Here the youngsters, our best customers, go back to school at the same time that the life guards wade into their fall season.

While some clubs keep their pools open beyond Labor Day, it is usually only a weekend operation.

Other areas of the club are not so fortunate. If the golf course has been using school age boys on its maintenance crews, it will have to compensate for the mass exodus in September; there will be a serious problem with golf car availability on week days as the caddie shortage makes itself felt; the clubhouse may feel the reduction in bus boys, housemen, and kitchen helpers.

More than one club manager has made the decision not to use employees who will leave him at the start of the school year and goes to great lengths to avoid it.

They canvas the homes in the neighborhood for housewives who represent a potential year-round staff pool; they arrange transportation to and from bus lines—in some cases, even buying a small bus for the purpose; they maintain employee

dormitories; and they even trade staff with city clubs whose business is usually limited during the summer and early fall.

For many clubs, however, these sources are not enough. Others find that their job openings are so much in demand—so much a part of the community's summer economy—that competition for the available positions begins in the early spring or even the previous winter. Such clubs continue to rely heavily on the school age group to provide the additional staff necessary to handle the seasonal load.

Planning is the key word for these clubs — and it begins in January when the program for the year is laid out. Club officers and committees should be alerted to the problem, particularly the greens, golf, and house committees, so that the membership will be aware of the expected difficulties and not plan mid-week events and projects that could be scheduled to take place on weekends.

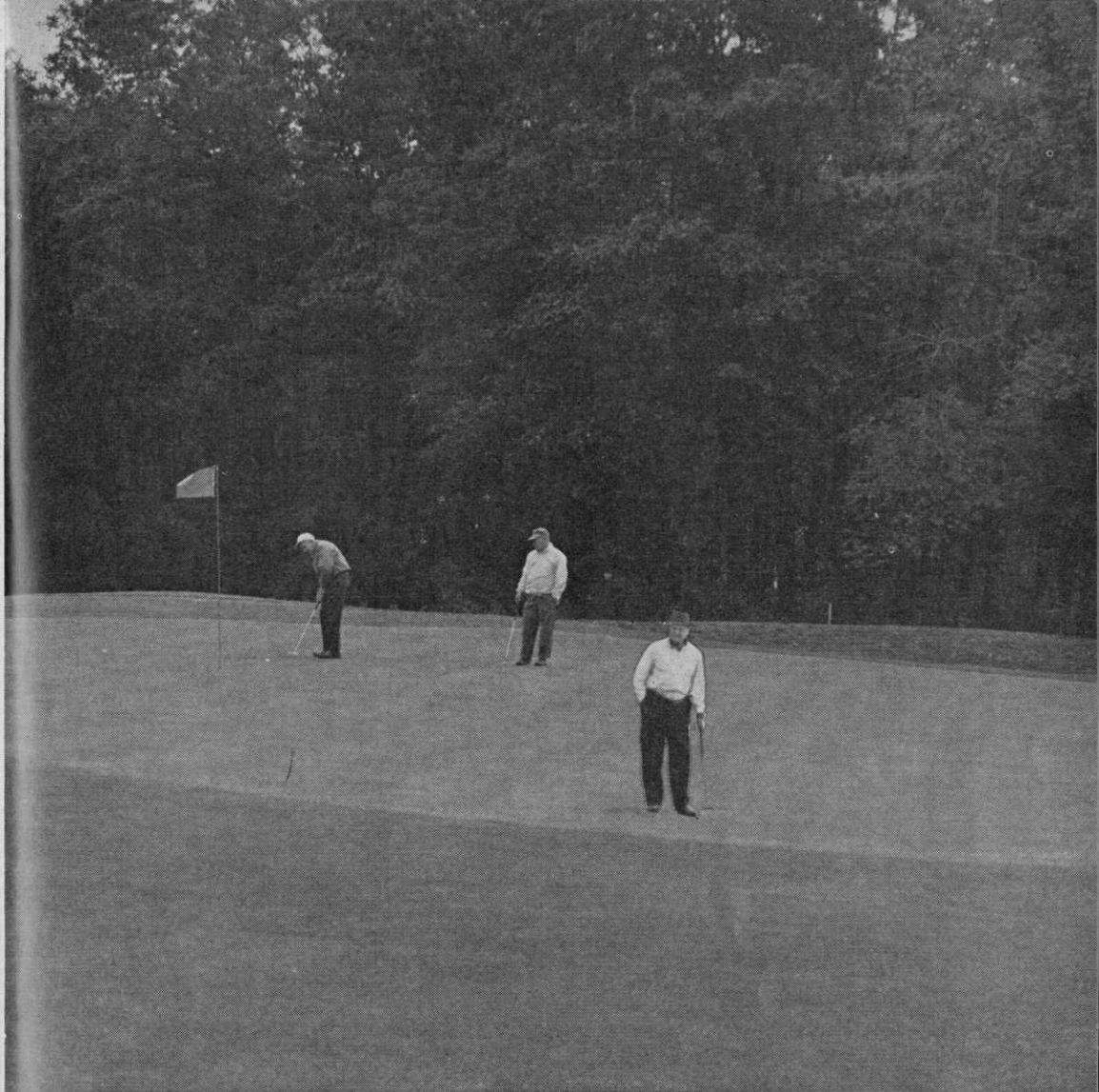
What sounds like a good party or satisfactory trap reconditioning program when plans are made in January may not appear so attractive in September when staffing must be considered.

Where neighboring clubs make it possible, cooperative planning is worth considering. Programs can be staggered to allow maximum utilization of the staffs of *both clubs*.

All possible sources of staff should be considered. In addition to the sources mentioned earlier here are a few others:

- Colleges and Universities.
- Job Corps.
- Summer Job Opportunity Programs.

Most of all, *plan ahead*. Without a plan you face management by crisis — never an attractive prospect. •



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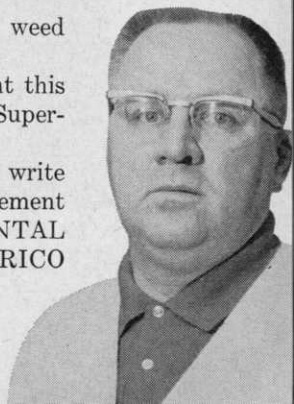
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PROFILE OF A steadily climbed upward—today his shops gross over \$300,000 annually. MERCHANDISER

By DON CURLEE

Nick Lombardo is now completing his third year as professional and general manager of the historic Del Monte Golf Course in Monterey, operating under a liberal eight-year contract that is a landmark in its own right. It is all the more noteworthy because, before Lombardo, Del Monte Properties Company, which owns Pebble Beach and Spyglass Hill as well as Del Monte had operated for more than 45 years without granting its professional a proprietary interest in the shop, including golf car rentals.

Lombardo's interest is *really* proprietary. The Lombardo golf shop grossed about \$300,000 last year. That includes revenue from the branch of the shop that has been operating for more than eight years at the Fig Garden Golf Course in Fresno. Lombardo is designer and one of the owners of this successful semi-private course.

Trained in the 40s and 50s in the school of golf that has prevailed popularly and profitably in the Chicago area for many years, Lombardo has applied the same tech-



Nick Lombardo, takes down a three-pack for a customer at Del Monte. Ball display on wall catches the golfer's eye, and leaves solid top counters for other use.

niques to his California locations that brought success to golfing families such as the Walshes, the Coghills and the Jemskes around the Chicago area.

He is a strong believer in the ownership-management of golf operations by capable, golf-knowledgeable people, and he believes they can operate profitably for public enjoyment. He refers to his training ground as "the postgraduate school of golf."

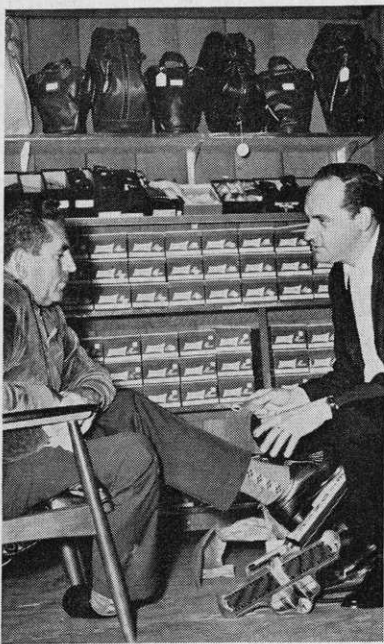
Operating profitably, in Lombardo's language, means merchandising golf—the course, the food and beverages, electric cars, and most of all, equipment and other golf merchandise. With him, it is all one big ball of wax, but every part of the total belongs there, and he stays right in the middle to make sure it hangs together.

He's a salesman at heart, but he's a salesman who is in love with golf. He sold vacuum cleaners during the off seasons in Chicago, and served as sales manager in Oakland, California, for a vacuum cleaner manufacturer for a year. In spite of the attractive financial return (he made more in a month of selling than he did in the rest of the year as an assistant professional), he found golf irresistible.

He likes to talk about "romancing" his golf products, meaning that he believes in building them up in the minds of the customers, making them as attractive as possible. Usually, this includes an attractive price too, but first it involves having the merchandise on hand for customers to *appreciate, feel, try on or try out.*

When he talks about his approach to sales it comes out in three basic steps, not necessarily original: (1) Create a need for the product (this could include providing a golf course as a need for golf equipment); (2) Promote

continued on next page



Although busy with over-all management of Del Monte, Lombardo always takes time out when old friends drop in. Here, his cordiality was rewarded with the sale of a pair of shoes.

Pro Merchandiser

continued from preceding page

a desire to own in the customer (it could take six months of "romancing" the merchandise, with a big assist from advertising); (3) Show customers how they can pay for the merchandise (it helps to provide easy financing and budget plans).

"When you're selling, you have an obligation to your customer to fill his needs not only financially but esthetically as well," Lombardo says. "This is an obligation you incur every time you take money for a product or service. As a result, the price becomes secondary. If I were depending on price, I would have been out of business long ago. Customers like a bargain, but not for long if the merchandise they buy isn't worth the bargain price they pay." Customer satisfaction is a key element in Lombardo's success.

"If all my customers bought only once, I'd go broke," he reflects. He treats all of his customers as if he expects them to come back to buy from him again and again—and most of them do.

It is his conviction that the pro shop should offer its customers the complete range of price and services they would normally receive at any other retail establishment they frequent.

"Most pro shops at one time carried only high-priced equipment," he says, "and I tried hard to prove that we could be competitive with the drug stores—with better equipment. When I sold low-priced merchandise, I was careful to explain its value, and, when golfers learned to appreciate better equipment, they usually came back to see me."

Merchandising techniques of the giants of the retail industry—Penneys, Sears-Roebuck, Montgomery Ward—can effectively be applied to golf sales. Lombardo likes to note that, "with \$9 billion in sales per year, Sears can't be wrong." These retailing techniques, coupled with the specialty knowledge of the professionals, equal success in the golf business.

It was just this formula, plus the response it engendered in the customers in

the Fresno area, that produced \$100,000 in sales for the Lombardo golf shop at Fig Garden during its first full year of operation in 1958.

Part of the formula included the utilization of all advertising media: TV, radio, newspapers, and, above all, customer satisfaction. This, together with Lombardo's typical 18-hour day, with his



Lombardo's brother-in-law Gordon Knott is manager-professional of the Fig Garden Golf Course. Nick Lombardo and Knott teamed up in 1960. Besides Fig Garden, they also operate a sportings goods store.

telling his story to all who would listen, created success at Fig Garden.

Lombardo offered to share his techniques with other professionals in the area by offering a sales program so that together they might benefit from realization of the potential lucrative golf business of the area.

"I learned that we golf professionals

Phase three consisted of the actual steps taken to promote golf play at Del Monte.

Increased local play figured prominently in his traffic building. A good deal of it has come in response to the incentives he has offered in a variety of multi-play plans—annual and monthly cards, a special rate for senior citizens, a women's club with a guest rate.



The 40 golf cars at Del Monte are Lombardo's property, in care of assistant Lee Russo, right.

all face the same battle to reach our market and, unless we wish to surrender a tremendous sales potential, we must work together in this task."

Although response to his offer was negligible in the Fresno area, Lombardo's merchandising reputation preceded him to the Monterey Peninsula where other golf operators regard him with respect.

One of his first goals at Del Monte was to increase golf traffic through a three-fold plan:

Phase one was the establishment of a working relationship with the golf course superintendent that would satisfy the needs of the golfers, and modernize the course maintenance program. This was successfully achieved with superintendent Larry Lloyd, Lombardo's "right arm."

Next, he expanded the facilities of the pro shop and changed procedures to accommodate increased golf play and sales.

Response was immediate and the volume of general public play has been on the rise ever since. The women's club alone has grown from 28 to more than 100 in about a year.

Tournament volume at Del Monte has also increased markedly. One reason is that green fees, prizes, a mid-tournament lunch and, often, a souvenir (such as a golf ball or towel), were included in the invitations as one attractive package. The package price, while a bargain, did not surrender valuable profit.

Actually, it usually represents little more than a slight concession on the green fee (down to the approximate level of some of the annual and monthly card-holder rates), with everything else in the package bringing its usual return. But that's merchandising, Lombardo style.

As a traffic builder, the tournaments can't be topped. Lombardo increased

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...Pros also rate PGA show high

Part II of GOLFDOM's survey reveals that nearly 80 per cent of the professionals attending the PGA Merchandise Show in January rated it more effective than the 1966 show.

Last month GOLFDOM presented the views of the exhibitors at the 1967 PGA Merchandise Show held in Florida. This month the professionals who attended the show have their say. Their high interest in the survey is shown by the 34 per cent return of questionnaires received.

Pro buying at the show is on the increase. Over 60 per cent of the professionals indicated that they bought more at this year's Florida show than at the 1966 show. Wholesale value of merchandise bought broke down thus: 48 per cent of the pros bought up to \$2,500; 43 per cent, from \$2,501 to \$10,000, with the remaining nine per cent of the pros in the \$10,001 to \$27,000 bracket.

These purchases represented up to 10 per cent of total yearly shop buying for 46 per cent of the professionals and from 11 to 40 per cent for 41 per cent of the pros. For the remaining 13 per cent of the pros, their show purchases represented from 41 to 90 per cent of their total yearly purchases.

One of the more vexed questions was whether the public should continue to be admitted to the show. (At present, they

are admitted for the first 2 days.) Unlike the exhibitors, of whom 64 per cent wanted the public barred, only 31 per cent of the professionals wanted to bar the public completely. However, a further 26 per cent wished to restrict the public to one day only, with the remaining 43 per cent being in favor of leaving things as they are.

The continual upgrading of the show is indicated by nearly 80 per cent of the pros rating this year's show more effective than the previous show. Moreover, 92 per cent of the pros attending this year's show attended the 1966 show. This, plus the fact that 94 per cent of the pros attending this year already have plans to attend next year's show, to be held in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., January 20-23, 1968, shows the solid support given to previous shows and augurs well for the success of shows in the future.

Here are the results of the survey:

Did you attend the 1966 show?

Yes	92%
No	8%

If you attended both shows, how did you rate this year's show over last year's?

More effective than last year	77%
As effective as last year	23%
Not as effective as last year	0%

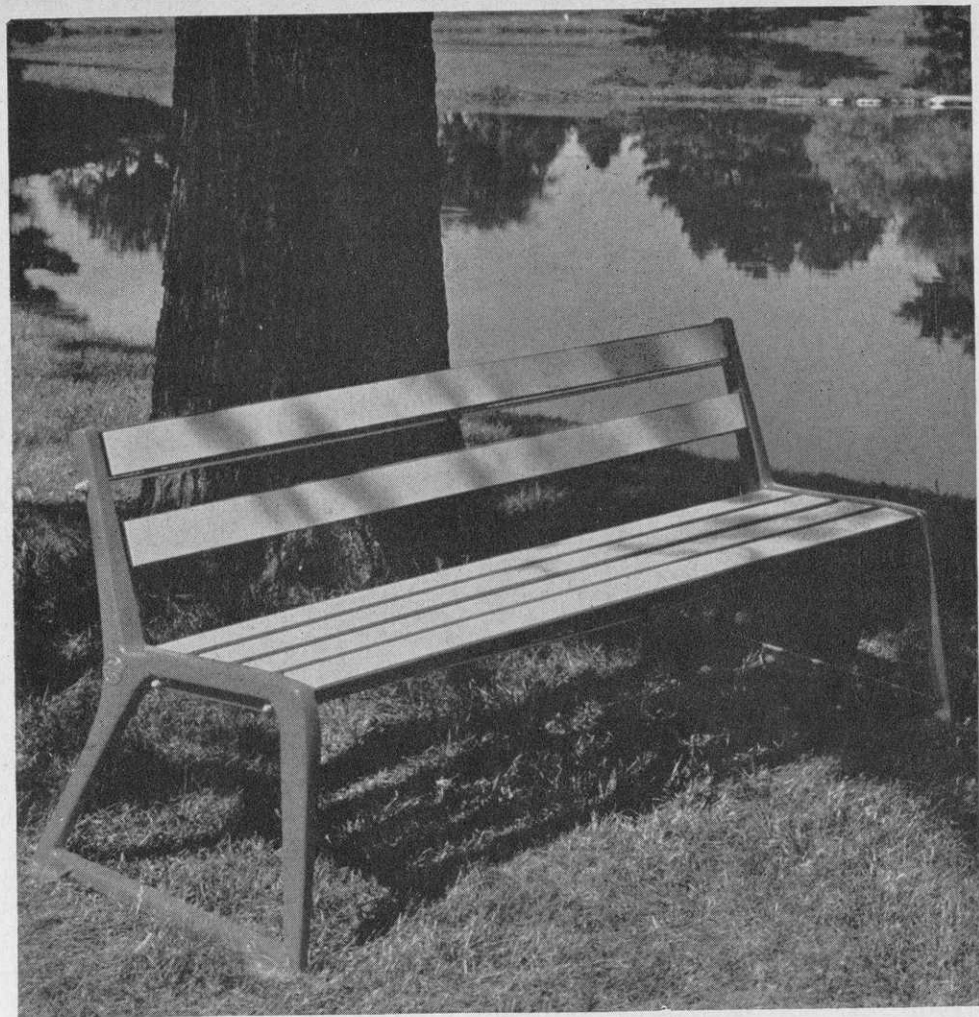
How many days did you spend at the show this year?

One day	12%
Two days	31½%
Three days	25%
Four days	31½%

If so, would you indicate what type of merchandise you bought.

Clubs	65%
Bags	65%
Apparel	90%
Shoes	51%
Gloves	44%
Accessories	66%
Golf cars	11%
Pro shop supplies	59%
Golf course supplies	6%

continued on page 20



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Pros Rate PGA Show

continued from page 18

Did you do any buying for your pro shop at this show?

Yes	97%
No	3%

Did you buy the same amount, more, or less at this year's show, than at prior shows?

More	64%
The same	26%
Less	10%

Would you estimate the wholesale value of the merchandise you bought at the show.

Up to - \$ 1,000	26%
\$ 1,001 - \$ 2,500	22%
\$ 2,501 - \$ 5,000	31%
\$ 5,001 - \$10,000	12%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	6%
\$20,001 - \$27,000	3%

What percent of your total yearly purchases for your Pro Shop do your show purchases represent?

1 - 10%	46%
11 - 20%	22%
21 - 30%	5%
31 - 40%	14%
41 - 50%	9%
51 - 60%	0%
61 - 70%	1%
71 - 80%	1%
81 - 90%	2%
91 - 100%	0%

Do you find as a result of these shows you are waiting for show time before buying for your pro shop for the coming year?

Now wait for show time to buy.	8%
Buy at home before show, and buy at show	33%
Buy at the show, and at home after the show.	15%
Buy at the show, and at home before and after the show.	44%

The general public was admitted to the show for the first 2 days. Do you think the public should be admitted or barred?

Bar the public.	31%
Allow the public for one day only.	26%
Continue to allow the public for two days.	43%

Do you plan to attend the PGA Show next year?

Yes	94%
No	0%
Undecided	6%

Do you have a regular Pro Shop?

Yes	100%
No	0%

Are you a —

Head Pro	94%
Ass't Pro	5%
Pro Shop Mgr.	1%

What type of course do you have?

Private club	70%
Semi-Private	18%
Municipal	4%
Public	8%

How many holes?

9 holes	18%
18 holes	72%
27 holes	6%
36 or more	4%

Pros' comments

One of the questions in GOLFDOM's survey invited the professionals attending the last PGA Merchandise Show in Florida to express constructive criticism of the show. A representative sampling of their answers follow:

"Have all merchandise displayed at the show be submitted in advance to a designated testing company to verify content and quality, similar to the underwriters' seal on electrical equipment."

"Very well run. Committee did a fine job on the whole."

"I don't believe that the show is of any particular advantage to me. If you are in a position where few salesmen call it might be all right. I certainly wouldn't make a trip to Florida just for the show."

"The PGA officials have done a tremendous job. It has improved each year. I don't go down to the show to criticize."

"I don't go to the show to buy merchandise, but to look at it and compare with other merchandise on the spot, and buy mostly after I get back to my shop."

"Better markings where different displays are. Larger street signs and numbers would help."

"PGA members only."

"More display space with larger booths."

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