



Accessories Offer Revenue Opportunities

Show attendees and exhibitors were focused on lower-cost impulse buys as a way to keep consumers shopping

By Don Jozwiak, Senior Editor

The Products & Services area of the PGA Merchandise Show always greets attendees with a remarkably broad array of accessory items for use on and off the course. The shopping approaches and sales pitches were quite different this year, with the uncertain economy prompting buyers and sellers alike to re-evaluate their approaches.

For attendees, the prevailing mindset was to look for relatively low-cost items that would make for impulse buys in a year when many consumers may put off buying a new driver or set of irons, and to find items that would work well as gifts and prizes for tournaments and outings. For retailers, the challenge was showing the return on investment PGA Professionals and golf shop buyers could expect by stocking their products.

"The retailers I've been talking to are saying that they're realizing that accessories are really driving golf shop sales in this economy," said Shannon Haslam, marketing communications director for Tifosi Optics, a sport-specific sunglasses manufacturer. "Hats, divot tools, sunglasses, grips – these are things that golfers are going to keep buying. It could be that the accessory category as a whole might be carrying shop sales for a while."

Golf marketing consultant Molly Meade echoed that outlook. Meade, who was at the 2009 PGA Merchandise Show working with clients such as Champ Sports and Hi-Tec, said accessories give golfers an opportunity to

spruce up their equipment without breaking their budgets.

"PGA Professionals are going to have the chance to sell more maintenance items that can extend the life of existing products – the customer might not buy new irons, but they might spend \$100 on regripping their clubs, or they'll feel better about their old shoes with a new set of cleats installed," Meade said. "The buyers I've met with are making sure they're going to have these sorts of products in their shops this year. It's a much easier sale, and the retailer has less exposure because of the lower price points."

If consumers are delaying purchases of big-ticket items, the Products & Services area had plenty of unique products to make everything like new again. Golf Pride touted its new VYNE line as the first grips designed and marketed exclusively for women golfers. Tiger Shark acquired the SuperStroke oversized putter grip – the model several PGA Tour players, such as K.J. Choi, are using – and promoted it as an easy-to-install accessory that can make a real impact on a golfer's ability to score. And PrideSports introduced a product called Softspikes ClubGrip, a wrap grip like those used on tennis racquets, that consumers can use to regrip their own clubs.

Show attendees also saw several new options in golf cleats, which make a good impulse buy for golfers choosing not to buy new shoes this season. The new BlackWidow Tour from PrideSports is billed as the first "self-adjusting" cleat, thanks to a proprietary design that offers different comfort settings. Meanwhile, Champ Spikes entered into a partnership with Zero Friction that allows retailers to buy prepacks of the companies' products mixed together – such as the new Champ Stinger cleats with Zero Friction tees – for greater impact.

"Now is the time to bring some new accessories into the golf shop," said Tara McKenna, PGA head professional at Tatnuck Country Club in Worcester, Mass. "That's the primary thing I'm shopping

Show attendees saw the latest from companies such as Club Car (above) and SkyGolf (right) in the Products & Services area.

