



Clubs Utilize Space to Increase Pro Shop Revenue

By Pamela Brill | February 26, 2020



Photo Courtesy The Clubs of Kingwood

Renovated retail shops are generating greater business for club and resort properties, thanks to better use of space and easier access to more merchandise.

Specialty retailing has become a challenging landscape, and the pro shop is no exception. As brick-and-mortar stores compete against online retailers and look to improve overall productivity, many club and resort properties are opting to redesign their shopping venues to create a more buyer-friendly experience.

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From customizable display fixtures that let managers update merchandise as needed, to additional amenities that extend the shop's usefulness, club shops are becoming more versatile—and lucrative.

The Right Direction

Inside the pro shop at Vineyards Country Club in Naples, Fla., an eye-catching weathervane sits atop one of the display tables. “It definitely gets a lot of attention, as many people want to buy it,” says Merchandise Manager Sandy McClain. Aside from being a conversation starter, the weathervane is positioned in the direction of the club’s two 18-hole courses—a fitting testament to a forward-facing facility that has its eye on the future.

Last October, Vineyards Country Club completed a full-scale renovation that included its 1,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse. While the original footprint remained intact, the redesigned space boasts a new vaulted ceiling, LED lighting and floor-to-ceiling windows. “They allow for an open-air feeling to the golf shop, with panoramic views of the two championship golf courses,” says Director of Golf Tom Metzger.



“[Our pro shop] was redesigned to promote a warm and welcoming feeling when you enter [and to] allow for an open-air feeling, with panoramic views of our two championship golf courses.” —Tom Metzger, Director of Golf at Vineyards CC in Naples, Fla.

Located at the northeast corner of the clubhouse, the pro shop receives a few hundred visitors on any given in-season day. “It’s designed to promote a warm and welcoming feeling when you enter,” Metzger says. A revamped layout brings members directly into the golf club and bag section, which then flows into men’s and ladies’ golf apparel. (Signature brands include Footjoy, Donald Ross, and Oxford for men, along with Tail, EP Pro and IBKUL for women.)

Nine custom built-in displays with slat walls showcase apparel, accessories and shoes. McClain touts their multifunctionality, as they can be used with waterfalls, faceouts or shelving. The shop currently has three sets of nesting tables and five four-way displays, and two additional merchandise displays will be added this year.

As part of the redesign, the sales counter was relocated to the west side of the shop, opening up the view out to the golf courses. Overhead, a hand-forged pendant-style chandelier with two-tone finishes adds to the ambiance.

To accommodate a burgeoning business, office space and a generously sized stockroom have been added. And with a reported 9 percent growth in sales since the redesign, the shop is poised for continued growth.

Expanding By All Counts

At Chaparral Country Club in Palm Desert, Calif., a revitalized clubhouse and pro shop—including expanded storage facilities—is largely responsible for an uptick in membership. “The whole club has a new feel,” says General Manager Todd Meginness of the construction project that began in the fall of 2018 and has helped to position the club for continued growth.

SUMMING IT UP

- > A variety of interchangeable retail fixtures lends itself to flexible displays.
- > Store layouts that foster easy access to merchandise create better traffic flow.
- > Repurposed, underutilized space makes room for storage, offices and other amenities.

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Chaparral's niche 800-sq. ft. pro shop added 200 square feet by opening up a wall and repurposing an existing adjacent office for storage. Situated on the east side of the clubhouse at the first and tenth tees, and next to the club's tennis and pickleball courts, this space now provides easy access for members. "During high season, our foot traffic increases on an average day to 100 to 150 people," says Meginness.



"The whole club has a new feel [and] during high season, our foot traffic now increases on an average day to 100 to 150 people." —Todd Meginness, General Manager at Chaparral CC in Palm Desert, Calif.

With the revised layout, shoppers are directed to the middle of the shop where the sales counter and check-in desk are located. Large windows across the back walls enable natural light to illuminate the sales floor, which is outfitted with four large wooden round and rectangular tables, and two sets of nesting tables.

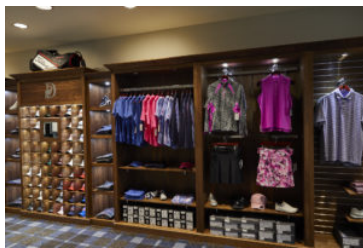
Three taller slim tables are located around the shop's perimeter, while multiple two-way and four-way matte-black racks accommodate hanging clothing. Designers opted for a grid wall in lieu of slats, to better expose the classic styling. "You can still see the beautiful sage-green paint throughout," says Meginness of the shop's décor, which is complemented by brown plaid carpeting.

Perhaps the greatest *piece de resistance* is a custom-made inset trophy case, which resides along the wall near a dressing room. Formerly located in the clubhouse hallway, the eye-catching accent piece has helped to generate more traffic into the shop.

Thanks to such bold business decisions, the updated clubhouse and shop have proved their worth. Since the renovation, the club has welcomed 40 new members as part of its membership drive that began in January 2019—a number that was continuing to grow a year later, Meginness reported at the end of January 2020.

Where Shopping is King

At The Clubs of Kingwood in Kingwood, Texas, two pro shops recently received the royal treatment after sustaining damage from Hurricane Harvey in 2017. The Deerwood facility, which was reconfigured in November 2018, was reduced from 1,185 to 616 sq. ft. as a result of a shift in business operations. "Most of the annual sales were special-order and not physical item sales," explains General Manager Blake Roberts about the need for less space at that property.



"The new look and displays give our members a better view of the products, and the wall fixtures are changing constantly to accommodate new items and keep things interesting. We have seen better profit after the first year, and fewer

The Kingwood shop, updated last March, maintained its original footprint at 1,650 sq. ft. and has earned over \$1 million in annual sales.

Along with their varying sizes, each of the shops is positioned to attract business from different parts of the clubs' activity. Deerwood's proximity to the cart staging area, men's locker room and bar generates approximately 80 customers per day, while the Kingwood pro shop's location, near the clubhouse main entrance, cart staging area and Tavern 91 restaurant, makes it a prime destination for nearly 350 daily visitors. Each of the shops is laid out to not only handle these



markdowns.” — Blake Roberts, General Manager at The Clubs of Kingwood in Kingwood, Texas

traffic patterns, but also make practical use of their respective spaces.

Roberts describes Deerwood’s style as “the typical country club pro shop, with dark wood and cabinets throughout.” The check-in counter is the primary focal point, prompting shoppers to step through apparel sections that vary in color and style, depending on the season.

“Hanging fixtures can be adjusted to hold pants in the colder weather, and shelves can be adjusted to accommodate gift ideas during the holidays,” Roberts notes. LED lighting illuminates product displays and complements the blue-gray plaid carpeting.

Over at the Kingwood shop, members are greeted by mannequins in the front window, and their gaze then shifts to nesting tables featuring the latest merchandise on the center of the floor. On the left-hand side of the shop, a gondola fixture features sports-themed merchandise, along with men’s clothing and an area with a bench for trying on shoes. On the right is a lit wall of interchangeable fixtures with men’s shirts, shorts, pants, hats and accessories, as well as ladies’ clothing and jewelry.

Boasting a total of three nesting tables, six gondolas and 11 interchangeable hanging/shelf fixtures, the bustling shop is well-equipped to manage an active inventory. “The wall fixtures are changing constantly to accommodate new items and keep things interesting for our members and guests,” says Roberts. He credits the built-in lighting on the shelves for highlighting key products. In addition, charcoal-gray carpeting with a subtle ivory abstract design enhances the black steel fixtures.

Thanks to this open-floor concept, shoppers at both locations are able to peruse the sales floor without being hindered by cumbersome displays. As a result, Roberts reports increased sales in golf and lifestyle merchandise over the past year. “The team feels this is attributed to the new look and displays that give our members a better view of the products,” he says. “With the change in space, we have seen better profit after the first year, and fewer markdowns.”

Maximizing Potential

At the KemperSports-managed Timberlinks Golf Club in Denton, Texas, space constraints had prevented the pro shop from flourishing. According to General Manager Ehren Guntert, “lack of space and the inability to merchandise effectively” prompted the need for a redesign, which took place in May 2019.

“The main purpose of the renovation was to better utilize the limited space by installing slat wall to maximize the merchandise we could sell,” Guntert says. “We also wanted to give the area more of a pro-shop feel while creating more of an open-area concept, drawing golfers’ eyes to the walls for retail products, versus having to walk through and around floor fixtures.”

Assuming a modest 589 sq. ft., the pro shop is located on the back side of the clubhouse and leasing office. Upon walking in the main entrance, a drink cooler and ice cream merchandiser are located directly to the right, and a feature wall stocked with Nike products is on the left-hand side.



“We wanted to create more of an open-area concept, drawing golfers’ eyes to the walls for retail products, versus having to walk through and around floor fixtures.” — Ehren Guntert, General Manager at Timberlinks Golf Club in Denton, Texas

Three large picture windows look out to the ninth green, first tee and practice green, with two glove and ball displays between them. Just past the feature wall is a check-in counter stocked with tees, jars of golf balls and other accessories. Behind the counter are two beer coolers, with snack bar items directly to the right.

When shoppers are in need of a break, they can head to the golf lounge on the shop's back side, grab a complementary cup of coffee and watch any of the three large HD TVs. The general manager's office, directly adjacent to the pro shop counter, rounds out the additional amenities.

With the redesigned layout in place, the Timberlinks shop experienced a record year in merchandise sales, Guntert says, with business increasing by a whopping 186 percent in 2019 versus 2018.

Made to Order

Pro shops that cater to members' special requests are becoming skilled in managing special orders, both in store and online. At The Clubs of Kingwood in Kingwood, Texas, special orders now comprise approximately 30 to 40 percent of the combined business for the Kingwood and Deerwood brick-and-mortar golf shops.

"If our special-order business continues to grow, we will make a dedicated space to receive and store special-order merchandise," says General Manager Blake Roberts. The club does not currently have an e-commerce pro shop.

At Timberlinks Golf Club in Denton, Texas, online shopping is on the agenda, with an e-commerce site scheduled to launch later this year. While details are preliminary, the shop is expected to provide a platform that complements its existing outlet, enabling golfers to purchase golf clubs, hats, bags and the like online, as well as Timberlinks gift cards.



Special orders now comprise approximately 30 to 40 percent of the combined business for The Clubs of Kingwood's two brick-and-mortar golf shops. As the special-order business grows, the shops will create dedicated space for it.

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