



# PGA

Michigan Section

## BIO OF SPECIAL AWARDS CANDIDATE

Name of Nominee: Ian Ziska

Year Elected to Membership: 2001

Award Nominated for: Merchandiser of the Year Public

Briefly describe your achievements/accomplishments that would pertain to this award:

The Katke Golf Shop is one of three retail entities on campus of FSU, so the right merchandising mix along with providing unique products at competitive prices are essentials that drive us for success. We create a buying plan each year that includes stocking product that is golf specific as well as team products not offered at the University Book Store or Hockey Arena Shop. I am mindful of our market and our inventory that includes moderately priced items for students and premium items sought out by visiting alumni, members and guests.

Keys to our success include implementing the use of *Trackman* to create on course contests to help identify how a player's equipment may be performing, monitoring and promoting our online store including the introduction of a private label apparel line, and relying on the use of Social Media to advertise and boost sales. By adapting to the cyber communication lifestyle through social media engines such as *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *Pinterest*, and *Facebook*, we have learned how valuable these tools are to the success of our golf shop. We are able to send our guests simple messages with a captivating photo that targets specials we are promoting. The posts allow us to gain a quick reaction, inform followers, as well as gain interest via "likes" or comments to know what brands are sought after in the golf shop.

We host a number of outings during the season. One of the most successful increase in retail sales has been including a gift to every one of our outing guests. Every outing package we offer includes a small gift such as a logo cap, towel, or custom items specifically requested. As a staple compliment, every guest receives a sleeve of golf balls. Offering a sleeve of balls to each guest adds value to the fee we charge the outing group, and provides me an opportunity to eliminate slow moving inventory.

Retail Mission - Sell quality inventory that is appropriately priced for guests and the facility, use creative ideas, and implement proper staff training which insures offering the best customer service that provides the highest level satisfaction for all parties involved. Though it is challenging and quite competitive, any retail operation can be successful by paying attention to its consumers, adapting to selling conditions and by being creative.

You don't have to give it away to compete; you just have to offer something that your competition can't. Like most, our competition includes the Internet, large retail stores, and local golf shops. My goal is to separate my operation using creative methods to add value where guests leave satisfied and trust the product and service we offer.

In the five years I have been responsible for overseeing merchandise concessions, we have increased gross golf shop merchandise sales from \$92K in my first year, to maintaining a

sales total of \$190K, over the past two years with a number of university restrictions in a challenging market. Gross Merchandise sales the year before I arrived were \$73K.

Our operation is unique; we operate as a golf shop from not only a merchandising standpoint, but also as a learning lab for students of the PGA Golf Management Program. Staff training is essential, I rely on the information sales representatives provide and the training companies offer to make sure my student team is well versed about the products we sell. This added training polishes the skills of my most experienced team members and gives our newest team members the tools needed to approach a guest with confidence.

We are always learning from our retailing experience and selling opportunities that are presented every day. In short, it's simple - success is based on creativity and how willing we are to put in effort. Customers and competition will provide the direction needed to create a plan to be effective. Each interaction will provide a learning experience by telling us what we did right or what we could have done better to close a deal. If I can better educate myself, my team, and create ideas that separate my operation from the competition, I am confident success will outweigh failure.

I would like to thank the chapter and its members for the opportunity to represent the NMPGA in the special awards process.