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# SHOOTING INDUSTRY®

THE INDUSTRY'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE — EST. 1955

\$5 | JANUARY 2023

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## Delivering On Early-Year Success

**N**ow it's official: Welcome to the 2023 New Business Year. This first edition of 2023 is packed with 15 features and columns primed to deliver early-year success for your business — topped by part two of the 2023 New Product Showcase, with products from more than 50 brands (pp. 62–78).

Have a comment after reading this issue? Contact our team anytime: [comments@shootingindustry.com](mailto:comments@shootingindustry.com).

### TRENDSPOTTING: WHAT'S GOING TO BE HOT?

In 2023, how will gun shops be impacted by inflation, do-it-yourselfers and manufacturers' never-ending quest to increase handgun capacity? What will it take to energize the AR market? And are we doing enough to engage new customers? Tim Barker interviews a panel of dealers who answer these questions and more in "Trendspotting: What's Going To Be Hot This Year?" For more, see pp. 28–30.

### SOUTHWICK'S 2023 INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

A January issue staple, the Southwick Associates team provides its outlook for 2023.

"Compared to 2022, headwinds that reduce demand will slightly dominate. Republicans gained control of the House, but barely. This will cause consumer concerns about future sales restrictions to ease somewhat — except in generally blue states and cities where pushes for greater restrictions on firearm sales and ownership will continue," the Southwick team predicts. For more insights, see pp. 36–39.

### DIGITAL MARKETING TIPS

Last year, digital ad spend hit \$441 billion — and it's projected to increase to \$485 billion this year. Whether it's through email campaigns, videos or



JANUARY 2023

even influencers, finding the right channels to connect with buyers online will play a role in your store's success this year.

FMG's Digital Content and Marketing Director Ashley McGee advises, "No matter what marketing strategies you decide to focus on in 2023, the important thing is you make a plan and stick with it." See "Market Smarter, Not Harder" on pp. 42–44.

### SOCIAL MEDIA: WHAT'S HERE TO STAY?

In "7 Social Trends for 2023 You Should Care About" (pp. 48–51), Michelle Scheuermann is quick to point out: "What worked in January of 2022 may not work in January 2023. And those 'old' stories we tell ourselves to use X number of hashtags per post, or just create Reels all day, also aren't working any longer."

What should dealers bank on working in 2023? Scheuermann outlines seven trends (plus a bonus one!) that will impact your business this year.

### COMING NEXT MONTH: RE-ENGAGEMENT KEY

One of the keys to success in 2022 will carry over into 2023: re-engaging with the millions of first-time buyers from 2020–2021. The February issue will outline how other dealers are preparing to connect with these buyers. Additionally, February will feature part three of the 2023 New Product Showcase, tips for calling in turkey hunting sales and offer helpful insights on automating compliance resources. **SI**

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## REACTIONS TO "STOREFRONTS VS. HOME-BASED VS. RANGES"

Here's my two cents on the latest commentary on "home-based" versus the rest story.

First off, Doug, you do still have a dog in the fight as you work for a manufacturer that supplies ranges — of course you'd want to see them get first dibs and the best deals. However, I will say I somewhat agree with you: As a home-based FFL, my goal is to one day open a range and join the good ol' boys.

With the political climate as it is, especially in my current state of residence, I'm not willing to take the risk of opening a brick-and-mortar first and will plug away as a home-based until I secure the funding for a range. Secondly, your analogy of selling Fords and guns doesn't hold up. I'm not aware of any car manufacturer that utilizes a distributor network as we do with firearms. So no, not anyone can sell a car, as you lined out.

Thirdly, you ask if we want the industry to become one giant webpage? It already has. Kudos to Buds, KYGUNCO, Battlehawk and the like, they've set the bar high (or low) depending on your viewpoint.

As for value-added from Benelli to go touch and feel their goods, in my opinion, if you're in the market for products of that caliber you pretty much already

**I've found if you build relationships with your sales people at the distributors and give your customers great service, we all can find a niche in the industry and not look down on others.**

know what you're looking for. No slick salesperson or display is really going to sway you.

Thank goodness we live in a free market economy. For now, guys like me can still earn an honest buck even though it may be difficult at times. I've found if you build relationships with your sales people at the distributors and give your customers great service, we all can find a niche in the industry and not look down on others.

— Ed Stephenson, Owner  
SQUAD 7 FIREARMS  
Longmont, Colo.

Doug VanderWoude, I read your article ("Storefront vs. Home-Based vs. Ranges," Nov. 2022 issue) and have to say not every home-based FFL is in a garage or on a dining room table. Some people just don't have the capital to open a brick-and-mortar or shooting range, so we start with an at-home FFL.

The comment "If you're only moving product and not providing service/benefits, you're probably hurting the industry" is a harsh statement. I know plenty of storefront FFLs that barely give more than service and limited products. And if they do, they're selling those products at a ridiculous price. Maybe they have their profit margins too high or want to rip off their community.

We as home-based FFLs have to keep our prices competitive with all of the big-box stores. That's where our service shines, because the products may be cheaper at big-box stores. **SI**

— Marc Workiewicz, Owner  
EVERY DAY CARRY LLC  
Leland, N.C.

Thank you both for your well-thought-out responses. My point: hobbyists don't deserve the same pricing and access to product that legitimate brick-and-mortar retailers do. I don't begrudge home, and internet-based sellers for taking advantage of our screwed-up industry supply chain.

If we want the industry to grow, we need to have profitable businesses selling the products and advertising them. If it's not profitable for brick-and-mortar stores and ranges, then who is going to advertise and bring in the next group of customers? I doubt many home-based FFLs will be putting up billboards. Plenty of storefronts and ranges don't deserve to succeed.

However, manufacturers and some distributors make it much harder by selling to hobbyists, which is damaging our industry.

— Doug VanderWoude

**HAVE A THOUGHT WHILE READING THE ISSUE?**

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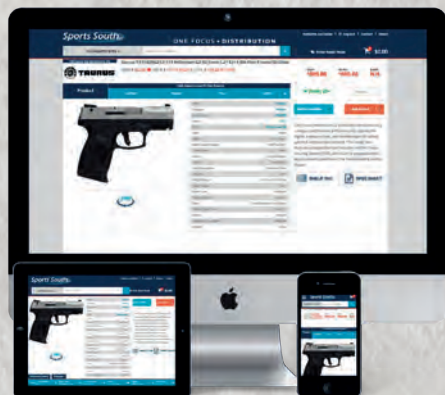
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## INDUSTRY DENOUNCES OREGON MEASURE 114

By Jade Moldae

With a divided federal government, battles at the state and local level are heating up — none more so than in Oregon. In this month's "2023 Industry Outlook," the Southwick Associates team made the following assertion after Republicans won control of the House of Representatives: "This will cause consumer concerns about future sales restrictions to ease somewhat — except in generally blue states and cities where pushes for greater restrictions on firearm sales and ownership will continue."

Southwick's prediction is already playing out in real time, as evidenced

by the reaction to the passage of Oregon Measure 114 this past November. Passing by the slimmest of margins, 50.7% to 49.3%, Oregon Measure 114 sets up several anti-gun provisions once it's enacted.

As passed, this state measure would require gun owners to enroll in hands-on firearms training and create a system of finger printing and data collection, limit magazine capacity to 10 rounds and would require Oregon residents to obtain a permit to purchase a firearm.

As expected, gun sales skyrocketed in the immediate aftermath of the

measure's passing. In the week following Election Day, Oregon State Police reported FICS background requests jumped from 850 per day before the election to 4,000 per day after.

Industry organizations such as the NSSF and Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) reacted swiftly to this bill's passage and its constitutionality is being challenged.

"Oregon's Measure 114 is blatantly unconstitutional," said Larry Keane, NSSF SVP and general counsel. "The right to keep and bear arms begins with the ability of law-abiding citizens to be

**Continued on p. 12**

“

**As expected, gun sales skyrocketed in the immediate aftermath of the measure's passing. In the week following Election Day, Oregon State Police reported FICS background requests jumped from 850 per day before the election to 4,000 per day after.**

## BILL HICKS & CO. LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

Bill Hicks & Co. Ltd., distributor for the hunting and shooting sports industry, announced the launch of a new company website. The new design is easy to navigate and is user-friendly, affording dealers a personal and secure web portal that puts them in control of their orders

from start to finish.

Some of the site's new-and-improved characteristics include more robust search and filtering options, an updated "My Account" component and much-improved online invoicing and payment functionality.

"Our goal was to give our dealers the best online experience possible, and after many years of research and analysis, as well as really listening to our customers,



I feel we have achieved this," said Jayne Nightengale, IT project manager for Bill Hicks & Co. / [billhicksco.com](http://billhicksco.com)



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## AIMPOINT AWARDED CANADIAN FIRE-CONTROL SYSTEMS CONTRACT

Aimpoint, manufacturer of red-dot sighting technology, was awarded a contract by Canada's Department of National Defence for supply of its FCS13-RE fire-control system and TH-60 thermal sight system to the Canadian Army.

The dual systems will be used during deployed operations as the primary day and night fire-control system on Canada's M3 84mm Carl Gustaf, produced by SAAB Dynamics. The contract was awarded through Twenty20 Insight Inc.

The FCS13-RE is a direct-view, dynamic, universal reflex sight that utilizes an integrated laser rangefinder and ballistic computer to give the gunner an aiming point corrected for range, type of munition, terrain angle and environmental conditions. The FCS13-RE provides a high probability of first-shot hit on both stationary and moving targets at extended ranges, and has an intuitive user control interface.

A proven system already employed by other NATO military forces, the Aimpoint FCS13-RE with TH-60 system fully met or



Aimpoint's FCS13-RE is a direct-view, universal reflex sight that uses an integrated laser rangefinder and ballistic computer to give the gunner an aiming point corrected for range, munition type, terrain angle and environmental conditions.

exceeded all of Canada's strict technical performance requirements.

"The FCS13-RE with TH-60 provides Canada's soldiers with a huge increase in lethality. The FCS package being delivered will more than double the effective range of the in-service M3 84mm Carl Gustaf, greatly increase first-shot hit percentage

and make the weapon system fully day and night capable," said A.J. Lutes, managing director at Twenty20 Insight Inc.

Deliveries of the Aimpoint FCS13-RE and TH-60 to the Canadian Army are scheduled for 2023. / [aimpoint.com](https://aimpoint.com)

### Continued from p. 10

able to obtain a firearm through a lawful purchase at a firearm retailer. Oregon has created an impossible-to-navigate labyrinth that will achieve nothing except to deny Second Amendment rights to its citizens. The measure is an affront to civil liberties which belong to the People, not to the state to grant on impossible and subjective criteria."

Measure 114 was initially fast-tracked to take effect Dec. 8. However, it has been met with a series of delays thanks to mounting legal challenges and with the permitting systems not yet up and running.

Dec. 14, Harney County Judge Robert S. Raschio ruled he would keep at least a portion of Measure 114 on hold until the state could establish the proposed permitting system. Another hearing was scheduled for Dec. 23, after press time on this issue.

As of this writing, the Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) has filed two of the four federal challenges to Measure 114. In its first filing, which was filed Nov. 30, SAF challenged the ban of standard-capacity magazines.

"The State of Oregon has criminalized one of the most common and important means by which its citizens can exercise their fundamental right of self-defense," said Adam Kraut, SAF executive director. "By banning the manufacture, importation, possession, use, purchase, sale or transfer of standard-capacity magazines that can hold more than 10 rounds, the State has barred law-abiding, peaceable residents from legally acquiring or possessing common ammunition magazines and deprived them of an effective means of self-defense."

In its second filing, Dec. 2, SAF focused on the restrictive firearm permitting and training requirements.

"The permitting process constitutes an egregious affront to the Second Amendment," said Alan Gottlieb, SAF founder and EVP. "There's no permit system in place, no guidance on who might qualify as a certified instructor and no forms on which applications may be made or permits may be granted, and no rules to carry Measure 114 into effect."

Leupold & Stevens and Radian Weapons, both based in Oregon, have also taken leadership positions to combat this law's passage. Prior to election day, Leupold joined with NSSF to create "Sportsmen Opposed to Gun Violence: Vote No on 114" — which raised more than \$100,000.

Other states are weighing anti-gun legislation in the new year — providing more evidence of battle lines being drawn at lower levels of government in 2023. Vigilance and engagement will be key to promoting gun rights.





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## BROWNELLS SUPPORTS SPECIAL OPERATIONS WOUNDED WARRIORS

Brownells customer purchases contributed to a company donation of nearly \$100,000 to Special Operations Wounded Warriors (SOWW) during Veterans Day week 2022 (Nov. 7–11).

Brownells pledged to donate a percentage of U.S. sales during that week through its 501(c)(3) veterans charity to support its various programs.

“Special Operations Wounded Warriors does important work supporting some of America’s most outstanding men and women,” said Brownells VP of Marketing Ryan Repp. “We’d like to thank our customers for helping us support SOWW.”

In order to continue its mission of providing therapeutic outdoor experiences, professional therapy and other services to wounded veterans of the U.S. special operations community, SOWW depends heavily on donations.

A 501(c)(3) charity, SOWW was formed in August 2012 to provide outdoor



experiences to a select group of active duty and veteran U.S. military special operations battle-wounded Purple Heart recipients. / [brownells.com](https://brownells.com)  
/ [sowwcharity.com](https://sowwcharity.com)

## VISTA OUTDOOR FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2023 GRANT PARTNERS

The Vista Outdoor Foundation, the philanthropic partner of Vista Outdoor Inc., announced 12 nonprofit organizations were selected by its board of directors to receive grants as part of the Foundation’s second annual grant cycle. The 12 organizations include nine that were part of the inaugural grant cycle and three that are new for fiscal year 2023.

“The Vista Outdoor Foundation made major progress in our first year, and we’re pleased to continue the momentum in the second year with the addition of three new partners,” said Chris Metz, Vista Outdoor CEO. “For the second year

in a row, the organizations selected for grants are leading the way in promoting conservation and encouraging more people to get outside. Their missions align with our own, and we’re proud to count all 12 groups as our partners in these efforts.”

“Our support of these 12 organizations — which do everything from encouraging youth participation and diversity in outdoor sports to protecting the outdoor spaces that we depend on to pursue our respective passions — is based on our company’s belief common ground can be found outside. We look forward to working alongside each group as they strive to unite outdoor enthusiasts,” said Dylan Ramsey, Vista Outdoor general counsel and corporate secretary and chairman of the Vista Outdoor Foundation board of directors.



Here are the 12 organizations honored in this grant cycle: Warriors & Quiet Waters, First Tee, Eco Defense Group, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Little Bellas, National Ability Center, National Forest Foundation, Outdoors Tomorrow Foundation, Pedal Power MN, Protect Our Winters, Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation and Youth Seen. / [vistaoutdoor.com/foundation](https://vistaoutdoor.com/foundation)

## CAMFOUR LAUNCHES BRAND REFRESH

Wholesale firearms distributor Camfour Inc. has unveiled a rebrand effort to commemorate its 70+ years of serving the industry.

“We’re giving the company a complete refresh from an updated logo to our dealer emails,” said Brandon Roper, Camfour VP of sales and marketing. “After 70 years in the industry, we’ve seen it all — but we continue to change, grow and adapt to the current market. Through our branding and messaging, we’re showing how we’re moving forward with the industry and our

customers.”

Beginning with the logo, the rebrand will encompass a new website debuting later in 2023.

“Our next step is working to update our website to provide a better online ordering experience for our current and new customers,” Roper said. “As the company who brought online ordering to the industry, we want to continue that innovation and bring an easier to use and more functional website to our customers.”

According to Roper, the rebrand extends to Camfour’s mindset in serving its customers.

“This isn’t just a refresh of our logo



and marketing materials, we’re working to improve processes — being easier to do business with, promoting our industry-leading virtual show, being quicker to market and more customer-focused than ever before,” he added. “With this brand refresh we have a more focused mindset on improving our customer relationships, and being the best partner for our customers to help them grow their businesses.” / [ezgun.net](https://ezgun.net)

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## NASGW, HUMMEL GROUP LAUNCH FORTIFY INSURANCE

The NASGW and the Hummel Group announced the creation of Fortify Insurance, designed specifically for the shooting sports industry.

“Fortify Insurance was created to advocate for the shooting sports industry in the risk management space, and we are grateful to partner with the NASGW in this effort. The only thing that is constant is change, and we recognize that fact. So, we’re proactively educating insurance companies to view this

industry differently. We’re positioning the members of this industry to take back control and receive the financial benefits of their good loss history,” said Tom Brenner, business risk advisor at the Hummel Group.

“Our partners at the Hummel Group have years of experience working with our industry and others that experience similar outside pressures. They understand our unique challenges and are committed to being a great option for businesses struggling to find insurance providers,” said Kenyon Gleason, president of NASGW.

Fortify Insurance is available to all



businesses in the shooting sports industry, regardless of their affiliation with NASGW. This includes manufacturers, distributors, dealers, retailers, FFLs and ranges.

Hummel Group is an independent insurance agency, based in Ohio since 1957. The group provides insurance, employee benefits and financial services to businesses across the U.S. / [nasgw.org](http://nasgw.org) / [choosefortify.com](http://choosefortify.com)

## NSSF RECOGNIZES NEW FIVE-STAR RANGE

The NSSF awarded the Illinois State Rifle Association Range (ISRA) its five-star rating for range excellence. The five-star rating is the highest in the NSSF rating system, which evaluates how ranges succeed in the areas of management, shooting sports development, appearance and amenities.

“The Illinois State Rifle Association Range excels in all aspects of running a modern public shooting facility — one that caters to a diverse clientele and provides consistent and rewarding customer experiences. The support it receives from association volunteers stands out. Without these volunteers, the range could not efficiently host as many organized shooting activities as it does,” said Zach Snow, NSSF director of member development.

“We are honored and pleased to have received a five-star range rating. We will continue to improve the ISRA Range in every way. This is not an end, but a beginning,” said Richard Pearson, executive director of ISRA.

Located near the small city of Kankakee, about an hour’s drive south of greater Chicago, the ISRA Range has more than 250 firing positions spread over 12 ranges and classroom facilities to support



The Illinois State Rifle Association Range houses several indoor and outdoor ranges. The indoor airgun range regularly features air pistol and air rifle leagues.

a full calendar of training and educational offerings.

The range is largely run by volunteer members of ISRA, and many serve as range safety officers. The facility inspires members to give back to an organization that has worked diligently to protect the rights of state gun owners to possess and use their firearms responsibly.

“I can’t say enough about the members who are volunteering their time to operate and maintain this outstanding facility. Without them, the range would not exist,” Pearson added.

Because of its many facilities, the ISRA Range caters to all types of recreational

shooters and is host to many state and national matches. The range includes a 50-yard pistol range, 100-yard and 100-meter rifle ranges, 300-yard rifle range and 25-yard training ranges. In addition, there is a shotgun range, 3-Gun shooting range, archery range and an indoor airgun range. The ranges feature keycard access.

More than 2,000 members take advantage of the facility, which offers many leagues and opportunities for competition. Matches and fun shoots are also offered exclusively for youth and for women. Range membership dues are separate from membership in the ISRA.

/ [nssf.org](http://nssf.org) / [isra.org](http://isra.org)

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## SMITH & WESSON DONATES TO NSSF'S PROJECT CHILDSAFE

Smith & Wesson announced a recent donation of \$5,000 to NSSF's firearm safety initiative, Project ChildSafe.

Project ChildSafe actively promotes firearm safety and education in all 50 states and the five U.S. territories. The program is dedicated to promoting responsible firearm handling and storage through the distribution of safety education messages and free firearm safety kits.

"NSSF is extremely grateful for this generous donation by Smith & Wesson. This, along with other donations during the holidays, will help NSSF build upon the important work of Project ChildSafe

to help reduce firearm accidents, thefts and misuse, including suicide," said Joe Bartozzi, NSSF president, CEO and chairman of the Project ChildSafe Foundation.

The donation will provide thousands of new gun locks and safety education materials to the Project ChildSafe program. These locks and materials are distributed free to the public through partnerships with law enforcement agencies, hunter education classes, youth programs, community organizations and other partners across the country.

"Project ChildSafe is a safety and education initiative that all gun owners and our industry should continue to embrace. Project ChildSafe has developed countless educational resources all gun owners should consult, and Smith &



**Smith & Wesson®**



Wesson is proud to include such a worthy program in our Week of Giving celebration and provide \$5,000 to NSSF to help promote and fund Project ChildSafe," said Smith & Wesson President and CEO Mark Smith. / [smith-wesson.com](http://smith-wesson.com) / [projectchildsafe.org](http://projectchildsafe.org)

# Attention FFL Dealers:

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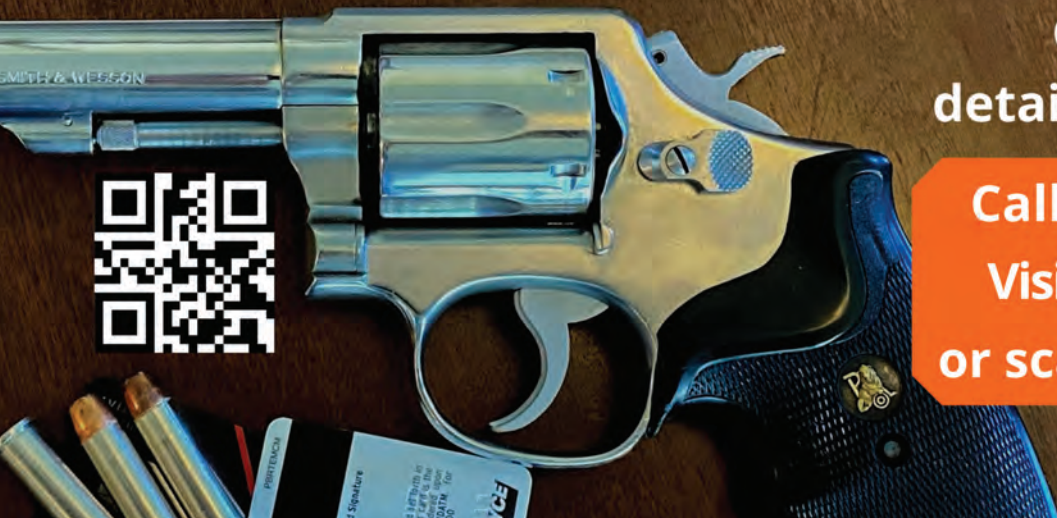
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## UPDATED ORCHID E-STATE RESTRICTIONS SOFTWARE PROTECTS FFLS

Orchid LLC, a leader in FFL technology, payment processing and compliance services, announced new product categories for its state restrictions software, Orchid eState.

In addition to a new firearms category, the application now includes magazines and suppressors. All three are accessible in the software interface or can be called electronically via an API.

"Compliance has never been more important, so it's critical we provide licensees with the best software application possible," said Philip Milks, attorney at FFL Law and Orchid VP of regulatory services. "Designed for all FFL types, eState can be used to prevent illegal firearm purchases, ATF violations and revocation. Simply select the applicable location, product type and related attributes to quickly view applicable restrictions before initiating a sale or processing an order."

Available as a cloud-based application



Orchid eState is available as a cloud-based application or API-driven integration, feeding state firearm restriction data directly into POS, ERP system or e-commerce website by zip code, firearm characteristic and UPC.

or API-driven integration, Orchid eState feeds state firearm restriction data directly into point of sale (POS), enterprise resource planning (ERP) system or e-commerce website by zip code, firearm characteristic and product UPC. The application can also be accessed manually for as-needed research.

Orchid eState can integrate with popular POS and ERP systems, including

Epicor, NetSuite, Fishbowl, Odoo, SAP, Sage, Oracle and others.

"Why risk managing compliance on your own? With our retail enterprise and suite packages, licensees can implement eState and other Orchid software to better serve and protect their operations," said Shaun Phelan, Orchid VP of sales and implementation. / [orchidadvisors.com](http://orchidadvisors.com)

## CMP TO PRESENT 2023 SCHOLARSHIPS

The Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) announced four new scholarships named in honor of distinguished members of its board of directors.

The \$20,000 scholarships, awarded over four years at \$5,000 each year, honor former chairman of the board and CEO Judith Legerski; former board member and vice chairman Harry Sieben (retired Air National Guard major general); former board member and treasurer Jon Bengtson; and former board member and founder of the CMP scholarship program Dr. Carolyn Hines.

"CMP has long focused on youth programs and giving back to the community. These new scholarships allow us to support the very best youth in America, and at the same time recognize the individuals who championed youth programs while guiding the success of the

CMP," said Jerry O'Keefe, CMP chairman of the board and CEO.

The organization also announced a new online application process eliminating paper forms and mailing documents. Also, applicants no longer need to maintain a minimum GPA.

Traditionally, the CMP scholarships have been used to pursue post-secondary or vocational programs, community college or university educations. However, in 2023, the CMP will broaden its scholarship program even more by supporting those enrolling in trade and technical schools, in keeping with a growing national trend.

"Our scholarships are available to all graduating high school seniors who have distinguished marksmanship, academic and community service records. By eliminating a minimum GPA, we are including those late bloomers who may have had a slow start in one area, but have shown great potential by the end of their high school career," said Dan



Durben, chairman of the CMP Scholarship Committee and former National Rifle Team and U.S. Olympic Team rifle coach.

In 2023, CMP will award a total of \$200,000 in \$1,000, \$3,000 and \$5,000 scholarships to over 90 rising high school seniors. The deadline to apply for a scholarship is March 31. A link to the online application portal and other scholarship information can be found at the CMP website.

The Garand Collectors Association has also generously donated \$30,000 in partnership with the CMP in its recognition of our nation's best young marksmen and women. / [thecmp.org](http://thecmp.org)

## HENRY REPEATING ARMS SUPPORTS FIRST RESPONDERS CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

Henry Repeating Arms announced a donation of \$50,000 to First Responders Children's Foundation (FRCF). The foundation was created in 2001 in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 for the 800 children who lost a first responder parent on that tragic day.

Since its founding, FRCF has grown to be a national non-profit, focusing on four key program areas: scholarships for children of first responders injured or killed in the line of duty; financial assistance/grants for line-of-duty death bereavement support; a mental health resiliency program; and first responder community engagement.

"The primary focus of our Guns for Great Causes program has always been about children, which is why we are



Henry's Anthony Imperato presents a check for \$50,000 to FRCF President and CEO Jillian Crane.

extremely proud to help support such an esteemed and worthwhile organization," said Henry Repeating Arms CEO and Founder Anthony Imperato.

The donation is part of a \$1 million pledge made to celebrate Henry's 25th anniversary through its charitable branch, Guns for Great Causes.

"FRCF is deeply grateful to Anthony Imperato and Henry Repeating Arms for their generous commitment to supporting first responders and their children. This donation will help to support our mental health resiliency program, which provides

confidential, trauma-informed counseling at no cost to children of first responders," said FRCF President and CEO Jillian Crane.

For the past 25 years, Henry's Guns for Great Causes has helped a wide variety of beneficiaries, including families of sick children undergoing medical treatments, children's hospitals, military veteran organizations, law enforcement and first responder groups and wildlife and habitat conservation agencies. [SI](#)

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D. MADOLE

### Chiappa Firearms USA Appoints President

Chiappa Firearms Owner Rino Chiappa announced the recent appointment of Don Madole as president of Chiappa Firearms USA Ltd.

Chiappa shared, "I am pleased to have a person as perceptive as Don remain working alongside me. As president of our U.S. headquarters and plant, he will continue leading our team toward our vision for the future."

Madole joined the Italian group's U.S. subsidiary in May 2012, during which time he served as GM and most recently as VP.



M. REASONER

### Buck Knives Names Sales VP

Mark Reasoner joined Buck Knives as the VP of sales where he leads the company's internal and external sales organization and independent rep groups.

Lane Tobiassen, president of Buck Knives, stated, "I have no doubt Mark will drive our sales organization and company to new heights as we continue building on our 120-year legacy of great products and superior craftsmanship."

Most recently, Reasoner was VP of sales at American Outdoor Brands. He has held executive-level sales positions with Drake Waterfowl, Eastman Outdoors and Pure Fishing.



C. BAILEY

### Iron Valley Supply Co. Taps Acct. Manager

Iron Valley Supply welcomed Chris Bailey as an account manager.

Bailey joins Iron Valley with more than 10 years' industry experience and is an NRA Certified Chief Range Safety Officer and Pistol Instructor. Prior

to his experience in the firearms industry, he worked as a radio reporter and a public relations executive.



L. HILL

### Second Amendment Foundation Hires Development VP

The Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) welcomed Lauren Hill as VP of development. Hill is responsible for leading SAF's fundraising and support efforts by identifying and creating new revenue streams and maximizing strategic partnerships.

SAF Executive Director Adam Kraut said, "Lauren's efforts will enable SAF to continue and expand its mission of education and litigation for years to come."

Hill brings over 15 years' experience in the nonprofit fundraising field to her new role. She served in a variety of positions for the Firearms Policy Coalition, Safari Club International, Better Business Bureau, International Sports Council, MLB and the NFL.

She earned an MBA from the University of Phoenix and bachelor's in communications from John Carroll University.



J. LEDOUX

### NSSF Adds Compliance Consultants

NSSF announced the additions of Judyth LeDoux, Patricia Smith and Dale Krupinski to its team of compliance consultants. They will assist with answering compliance hotline questions, conducting site visits through the NSSF Premium programs and with hosting live and online educational sessions. LeDoux and



P. SMITH



D. KRUPINSKI

Smith will join NSSF's firearm retailer compliance consultants group, which offers expert guidance on federal regulatory compliance, and Krupinski will focus on providing expert guidance for Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliance.

"We are extremely pleased to have these three experts, each having decades of experience, amplify NSSF's ability to provide guidance to federal firearms licensees and shooting ranges so they can be prepared for a compliance audit immediately or in the future," said John McNamara, NSSF managing director, member services.



L. TUCK

### The Headrest Safe Co. Adds CMO, COO/CFO

The Headrest Safe Company LLC announced Louis Tuck assumed the role of COO and CFO, and Jeff Naranjo will assume the role of chief manufacturing officer.



J. NARANJO

Tuck's duties and responsibilities as COO include overseeing operational policies and procedures, planning, maintenance, compliance and efficiency, including human resources. As CFO, he is responsible for managing the financial actions of the company — tracking cash flow, analyzing strengths/weaknesses in the company's finances and overseeing all aspects of its financial success including driving sustainable growth and minimizing losses.

Tuck graduated from the University of Alabama and became a partner in a top 30 accounting and tax advisory firm.

Naranjo oversees the company's manufacturing processes as well as sources suppliers and vendors.

After earning a degree in construction management and building inspection technology, Naranjo spent 16 years in the A/V-IT industry.



R. JENNINGS

### RubLine Marketing Retains Strategist/Manager

Ryan Jennings joined RubLine Marketing as its new marketing strategist and account manager. He will develop full-scope marketing plans, evaluate and optimize campaigns, purchase media assets to execute initiatives and manage overall client strategies.

"We're thrilled to have a seasoned professional like Ryan join the RubLine Marketing team," said Chase Rohlfen, president of RubLine Marketing. "His decades of experience and knowledge of the outdoor space will bring incredible value to our clients."

Jennings brings over 20 years of

experience in sales and marketing to his new position, including stints with Grand View Media Group and American Exhibition Services. Most recently, he served as the VP of marketing and advertising for *The Trussville Tribune*.



C. KOZENIESKY

### USA Shooting Announces CEO

USA Shooting announced the appointment of Craig Kozeniesky as its new CEO.

Chad Whittenburg, chairman of the USA Shooting board and president of the USA Shooting Federation, shared, "Colonel Kozeniesky is a proven leader in the shooting industry and the Marine Corps, both in and out of combat. The results of our search yielded a true leader who is passionate about USA Shooting and who will work tirelessly to achieve the mission."

Kozeniesky served in the Marine Corps for 27 years and is a combat veteran of Desert Storm, Iraq and Afghanistan. He has been connected with USA Shooting for over 10 years.



M. HARRIS

### Creedmoor Sports Promotes Customer Care Manager

Creedmoor Sports promoted Melanie Harris to the position of customer care manager where she now oversees all customer service functions.

"Seeing her achieve the level of professional growth she has in such a short time is impressive, to say the least. I know our customers are in great hands with Melanie and her team," said John Teachey, Creedmoor VP of operations and marketing.

Harris joined the company in 2020 as a customer service representative. **SI**

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**IWI.US**



BY MASSAD AYOUB

# EXPLAINING DEADLY FORCE: THE FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

Since the beginning of the pandemic, and concurrent with civil disturbances around the nation, we now have 10 million or more first-time gun owners. Most (if not all) bought their initial firearm for self-defense. But before those folks' arrival, there were other gun owners who weren't entirely clear exactly when the deadly force of a gun could legally be used to protect their own life, or the lives of other innocent parties.

These self-defense customers will have questions on this topic for experts like you. It's been a long time since we've touched on those elements in this space. Let's start with the foundation.

## FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

The firearm is a tool of deadly force (or lethal force, the terms are interchangeable). Deadly force is the degree of force which a reasonable, prudent person would consider likely to cause death or great bodily harm (i.e., crippling injury) if employed against another human being.

Such force may only be used only in a situation of *immediate, otherwise unavoidable danger of death or great bodily harm*. Historically, this situation is created by the simultaneous presence of three criteria. Those criteria are most commonly known as Ability, Opportunity and Jeopardy.

## THE ABILITY FACTOR

The Ability factor means the opponent has the power to kill or cripple. This is at its most obvious when the opponent is armed with a deadly weapon: a gun, a knife or something that can be used as a bludgeon. But it can also be constituted by something known as *disparity of force*. In a disparity of force situation, the attacker(s) may be ostensibly unarmed, but within the totality of the circumstances are still likely to kill or cripple and don't need a deadly weapon per se to do so.

Many things can constitute disparity of force. It exists if the opponent is much larger and/or much stronger than the defendant. It often takes the form of force of numbers: two or more assailants attacking a lone innocent person. Another element can be known or obviously recognizable high skill in unarmed combat: an opponent known to be a semi-pro boxer, for example, or a black belt in the martial arts.

Male attacking female is often, but not always, disparity of force; the legal theory being the male of the species is generally larger and physically stronger and more culturally disposed to physical aggression than the female. Able-bodied people attacking the handicapped are certainly creating disparity of force.

Position of disadvantage is an

◀ With millions of new self-defense customers, it's becoming more important for dealers to impart the circumstances when lethal force can be used. Using the foundational elements described here is a start. (Photo: O.F. Mossberg)

often-overlooked element of disparity of force element. The best-known recent case in which it was in play was George Zimmerman's 2013 acquittal in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, whom the evidence showed was beating Zimmerman's head against the pavement when the latter fired the single, fatal shot in question.

## THE OPPORTUNITY FACTOR

The Opportunity factor means the opponent is capable of immediately employing his power to kill or to cripple. An attacker wielding a knife and shouting death threats from 100 yards away from his intended victim has Ability, but not yet Opportunity. At the same distance and armed with a rifle or even a handgun, the same attacker at the same distance would have both Ability and Opportunity.

With contact weapons — that is, a knife or club or even bare hands — physical obstacles between assailant and the intended victim of the attack will be another element of the Opportunity factor.



**Let's face it: We live in an armed society where anyone carrying a gun or even a knife has Ability and Opportunity surrounding them as they walk.**

In 1983, Dennis Tueller of the Salt Lake City Police Department did the seminal testing that showed the average adult male could, from a standing start, close a gap of 7 yards and inflict a fatal knife wound in an average time of 1.5 seconds.

Today, this may be the single most proven element of what is now known as force science, a term popularized by Professor Bill Lewinski. It has often been misinterpreted as a "21-foot rule," implying it was justifiable to shoot a knife-wielder at a distance of 19' but not from 23'. In fact, it's simply a guideline as

to how quickly a contact weapon may be employed, no more and no less. What the knife-wielder is doing at the moment is the key thing, which leads us to the final criterion.

### THE JEOPARDY FACTOR

The Jeopardy factor is the element of “manifest intent.” In other words, intent to kill or cripple as manifested by the opponent’s words and/or actions. This is often the deciding factor.



**The belief one is in deadly danger warranting a lethal force response must be both reasonable and sincere.**

Let’s face it: We live in an armed society where anyone carrying a gun or even a knife has Ability and Opportunity surrounding them as they walk. They are no danger to anyone until they manifest an obvious criminal intent to harm an innocent person.

All these elements are seen through the lens of an ancient legacy of the English Common Law from which our own law derives: the Reasonable Man Doctrine. The judge can be expected to instruct the jury in any self-defense case, criminal or civil, to ask themselves, “What would a reasonable, prudent person have done in the same situation, knowing what the defendant knew?”

This is a three-pronged test. Prong One: What would the reasonable and prudent person — the logical, cautious individual — have done? Prong Two: In the exact same situation the facts and testimony in evidence show the defendant was facing, and not some fantasy woven by opposing counsel from whole cloth. Prong Three: Knowing what the defendant knew, not only in the seconds before the incident, but going all the way back to the time when that person decided to be armed. (State of mind is always critical in self-defense cases.)

### PRECLUSION, SINCERITY & REASONABLENESS

Ability, Opportunity and Jeopardy apply to what the attacker is doing, which triggers the armed-citizen’s response. *Preclusion* examines what the citizen could have done to avoid the situation. Could they reasonably expect to just walk away unharmed? If so, they should have done exactly that. Did the armed citizen do anything to provoke the situation or “keep the ball rolling” in an escalating situation? Was the citizen in a place where he or she had no right to be, or doing anything illegal at the time? Violating any of those precepts “shreds the mantle of innocence” and compromises a defense argument of self-protection.

The belief one is in deadly danger warranting a lethal-force response must be both reasonable and sincere. It’s reasonable to shoot a man threatening to kill you with a pistol, which turns out later to be a realistic toy ... but only if the shooter reasonably believed it was a real gun. If I let you examine my realistic plastic toy copy of a Beretta 92, you can’t shoot me and claim the belief it was a real 9mm I was going to shoot you with.

Conversely, as one prosecutor put it, someone might sincerely believe the person they shot was an alien about to abduct him to another planet, but it would not be a reasonable belief and therefore would not be forgiven by the court.

### MORE TO COME ...

Above, we have the essential basics of what warrants the use of lethal force in defense of oneself or other innocent parties.

However, some of your customers will have questions about issues such as retreat requirements and the Stand Your Ground principle, Castle Doctrine and other issues that in recent years have been the subjects of extremely twisted interpretation in the media and on the internet. **SI**

We’ll examine some of those in the next issue. Have a comment in the meantime? Send any feedback to [comments@shootingindustry.com](mailto:comments@shootingindustry.com).

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## ARMS & THE WOMAN



BY NANCY KEATON

# REACH WOMEN THROUGH CREATIVE IDEAS & CUSTOMER SERVICE

Reaching female customers is not a one-size-fits-all plan. Two retail stores with ranges talk about the different approaches that are working for them.

### “THE GOLDEN RULE”

What happens when your business philosophy is simply, “The Golden Rule?”

Terry Flick, president and co-founder of Republic Gun Club in Waco, Texas, explains his background in corporate retail with JCPenney and Zales is the foundation for operating the range, retail store and event/meeting space. JCPenney had the motto of “The Golden Rule” — treat others as you want to be treated — and Flick says it has stuck with him, as his job is to appeal to everyone. Opened in October 2021, the business is already proving Flick’s instincts to be spot on.

“One thing the gun industry can lack is customer service. In my mind, it’s the easiest thing to do, it’s like the foundation. And then understanding where the growth is — and right now it’s with female shooters,” Flick explained. “It’s an underserved demographic, it’s growing and it’s a space you can easily slide into.”

Training for retail and range staff has been heavy on customer service.

“The people we hire and train are very personable, patient and they can recognize someone on the firing line

who might be struggling and be able to engage that person in a way that isn’t condescending,” Flick added.

### EVENTS FOR WOMEN

Flick revealed he deliberately brought some great women on staff.

“I wanted someone who could think about what kinds of events we could do to attract women,” he said.

Recently, the facility hosted a “Sip, Shoot and Mix” event with women getting in some range time before heading to the Member’s Lounge for wine tasting, followed up by mixing their own nail polish.

“It was really fun,” recalled Ashton Combs, Republic Gun Club’s assistant director of events and memberships. “It’s a cool community; you have all these women coming in, some had never even shot before. Some were wives of husbands who came in to shoot and they came in to just meet other women.”

Flick agreed: “For me, it’s something I wouldn’t have dreamt up. As a range owner, I want to be open-minded about what we can do. It doesn’t take away from who we are or our core demographic. A guy who comes in to shop to purchase a firearm or shoot isn’t going to care if there’s a wine and nail thing going on.”

Other events to bring in women include a weekly Ladies’ Night and Date Night. The range also hosts the

◀ The team at Republic Gun Club is trained on “The Golden Rule” — treating customers how *they* want to be treated.

Waco chapter of A Girl & A Gun Women’s Shooting League.

Classes are also offered as well as private lessons, which are most often taken by women.

“I think it’s about debunking that whole intimidation factor. It can be terrifying as a woman to get into this world and we’re trying to bridge that gap and make them comfortable here,” Combs said.

### WHAT ABOUT WOMEN WHO AREN’T THERE TO SHOOT?

Event spaces can be rented without a club membership. Interestingly, one of the most popular events is baby showers.

“Recently we had a large shower. The women came in and they decorated the entire room and it was beautiful. You would never even assume you were at a gun range,” Combs shared.

Flick believes the club has created an inclusive environment. Men can come in with their wives and the women might shoot for a while, but when they’re done they can go hang out in the Member’s Lounge. It gives them the space where they can relax and drink coffee or water while they’re waiting for their husbands to finish shooting.

### A POSITIVE RECEPTION

Republic Gun Club has been open for just over a year and they already have more than 1,100 members, of which one-third are women.

Looking at the online ratings, you can see customer service is reflected in an overwhelming majority of the comments, more than half of which are posted by women. Comments include:

• “It’s a range that has a very boutique/lodge feel to it. It’s the nicest range I’ve ever been in. The owner is friendly and all of the staff are as well.”

• “I didn’t feel any type of judgment whatsoever!”

To give you an idea of the commitment to quality and the friendly nature of the staff, all you need to do is take a look at the rest of the reviews. Not just the reviews themselves, but that *every* one of them has some response from the owner.

“When they remember the names of our staff who made an impact on them,

and they go online to mention them, you know the treatment they received must have really impacted them,” reasoned Combs.

“We’re bringing people in who probably never would have stepped foot in here, and now they’re saying, ‘Oh, this is nice and it’s not what I expected,’” Flick noted. “And why wouldn’t you go above and beyond to make people feel comfortable?”

### IT’S ALL IN A NAME — OR IS IT?

With a name like “The Man Cave” one might question whether the only local retailer in Centralia, Wash., with a range welcomes women and can turn them into customers. Shoni Pannkuk, who owns the business along with her husband, Hobe, has some thoughts.

““

**Oh, my gosh, we had hundreds of women and kids come through and they absolutely loved it!**

**Shoni Pannkuk, Co-Owner**

*The Man Cave Outfitters • Centralia, Washington*

“Actually, we never even thought about whether the name was an issue of any sort for attracting women, nor deterring,” laughed Shoni. “The growth in women customers just sort of happened organically through word of mouth and great reviews. But it’s funny you ask because we’ve started attending vendor shows and we get so many comments saying something like, ‘The Man Cave? But your booth is staffed with women!’”

“The Man Cave Outfitters” started in the Pannkuk’s home in 2014. Hobe and his buddy came up with the name and just thought it was fun. In 2015 it was time to expand to a storefront and they just continued with the name.

### WOMEN-FRIENDLY FEATURES & OFFERINGS

While not specifically setting out to target women, one attractive family-friendly feature of the retail space is a fun kids’ corner.

“It can be hard to keep kids occupied while their parents are busy with paperwork, so we wanted to provide something for them to do,” Shoni shared.

Basic Pistol Safety classes began about two years ago, scheduled about every month or two. Now, as the word has spread, they’re averaging three to five classes per month. Both women-only and co-ed classes are offered as a choice, but often, they are mostly comprised of women.

Shoni happily shared, “The classes have been extremely successful. The feedback we get on evaluations after every class is, without fail, the amount of comfort or confidence they are feeling after participating is astounding.”

The Man Cave also offers the usual Ladies’ Night and fun monthly competitions with different themes.

### OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT KEY TO SUCCESS

Outreach and engagement activities are where the Pannkuks are reaching the most women, however. As mentioned, Shoni and her staff have started attending various vendor shows and because vendor shows are mostly geared toward women, they’re making a lot of new connections.

The Man Cave is also very involved in local community events, participating in fundraisers and activities such as providing the kids’ “Duck Shooting” booth at the county fair last summer.

“Oh, my gosh, we had *hundreds* of women and kids come through and they absolutely loved it!” exclaimed Shoni. “It’s insane the number of people we meet at the fair. It’s great outreach.”

Hobe and Shoni are equally involved in the business and equally serving all customers.

“We’re both active and share responsibility. If a woman comes in and wants to talk to a woman, she can talk to a woman. We are equally available to whoever comes in. We just want everyone to know they are welcome here. Bring your spouse, bring your kids. We’re here for everyone.”

The results speak for themselves: It’s a message clearly resonating with community members. **SI**



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## BEST PRACTICES

BY DALE KRUPINSKI

# 4 TIPS TO PREPARE FOR YOUR NEXT OSHA INSPECTION

**S**hooting ranges are at an increased risk of being inspected due to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) National Emphasis Program to reduce occupational exposures to lead. OSHA has issued citations with monetary penalties as high as \$224,735 to individual shooting ranges and \$1,035,600 to range-cleaning companies.

Is your gun range ready for an OSHA inspection? If not, follow these four suggestions to better prepare for one.

## 1. CONDUCT THE REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS

Take action and ensure your shooting range has completed the following OSHA-required assessments:

- **Airborne Lead Dust Personal Exposure Monitoring:** Unless you operate a lead-free (both bullet and primer) range, you're required to conduct full-shift personal airborne lead dust sampling on your range staff. The results of this sampling are independent of any personal protective equipment (e.g., respiratory protection) worn and will determine to what extent OSHA's lead standard (29 CFR 1910.1025) will apply to your facility.

When planning your sampling, be sure to schedule your airborne lead dust assessment during peak range usage and don't forget to evaluate lead exposure during non-routine tasks such as filter changes, deep range cleanings and lead reclamation.

Typical job categories to sample will include range masters, range safety

officers, range instructors, gunsmiths and range maintenance staff. When measured airborne lead dust levels are below allowable OSHA limits, additional sampling is only required when there is a production, process, control or personnel change that could result in new or additional exposure to lead.

- **Personal Noise Dosimetry:** Like with lead, noise exposure monitoring (noise dosimetry) must also be conducted to evaluate compliance with OSHA's noise exposure limits (29 CFR 1910.95). Similarly, the results of this sampling are independent of the hearing protection worn by the range staff. That is, a shooting range would still receive citations if measured noise levels are above allowable OSHA limits and if the range has not implemented the required hearing tests, noise training and noise controls — regardless of the hearing protection used. Ranges should conduct noise dosimetry during peak operating conditions and characterize exposure of their range staff. Often, this assessment will be conducted along with the airborne lead dust sampling.

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Hazard Assessment:** PPE such as respirators, hearing protection, eye protection, gloves and coveralls are commonly used by range staff. However, most range owners are unaware of OSHA's requirement (29 CFR 1910.132) to conduct a formal hazard assessment at their range to determine which operations warrant PPE. If your range has already completed the

◀ This RO has a Sensidyne GilAir Air Sampling pump and TSI Quest 4P personal noise dosimeter while on the firing line at The Gallery Sportman's Club in Lakewood, Colo.

required PPE hazard assessment, be sure to generate a written certification identifying the workplace evaluated; the person certifying the evaluation has been performed; the date(s) of the hazard assessment; and, which identifies the document as a certification of hazard assessment.

## 2. DEVELOP THE REQUIRED WRITTEN PROGRAMS

Depending on your specific shooting range operations, the following written programs may be required by OSHA:

- **Hazard Communication:** Shooting range staff use a variety of potentially hazardous chemicals when performing gun cleaning, janitorial and/or range cleaning operations. If your range uses hazardous chemicals, you must develop, implement and maintain a written hazard communication program to inform your range staff of the chemical hazards associated with your workplace. Components of this written program include, but are not limited to, a list of the hazardous chemicals present, safety data sheets (formerly material safety data sheets) for each hazardous chemical, chemical container labeling and employee training.

- **Bloodborne Pathogens:** Slide and hammer "bites" are common with inexperienced shooters. If range staff is required to either administer first-aid or clean up blood, then your range must develop, implement and maintain a written Exposure Control Plan identifying the job classifications having, or are likely to have, exposure to blood, and how your range will respond in the event a range staff member was exposed to blood.

- **Respiratory Protection Program:** Too often, range managers and owners will provide their staff with respiratory protection without fully realizing the regulatory consequences of their action. A written respiratory protection program is required by OSHA whenever respirators (even disposable N95 respirators) are used. A gun range's written respiratory protection program must contain specific procedures describing how respirators will be selected, fitted, used, maintained and inspected.

- **Lead Compliance and Hearing**

**Conservation Programs:** Depending on results of the OSHA required airborne lead dust and noise dosimetry, a shooting range may be required to develop, implement and maintain written lead compliance and hearing conservation programs detailing how the range will control lead and noise exposures.

### 3. PROVIDE THE REQUIRED EMPLOYEE TRAINING & INFORMATION

Shooting ranges must provide their staff with safety and health training whenever there is a potential exposure to a hazard. Here's a short list of the most common trainings gun ranges will need to provide to staff:

- **Hazard Communication:** Range staff must be trained on the hazardous chemicals in their work area before initial assignment and when new chemical hazards are introduced. Range owners must also inform range staff of the requirements of OSHA's hazard communication standard (29 CFR 1910.1200), hazards of chemicals, appropriate protective measures and where and how to obtain additional information.



**OSHA has issued citations with monetary penalties as high as \$224,735 to individual shooting ranges and \$1,035,600 to range cleaning companies.**

When classifying the hazards of lead, at least the following hazards are to be addressed in a range's hazard communication training: reproductive/developmental toxicity; central nervous system effects; kidney effects; blood effects; and acute toxicity effects.

- **PPE:** Prior to using PPE, range staff must be trained to know when it is necessary; what kind is necessary; how to properly put it on, adjust, wear and take it off; the limitations of the equipment; and proper care, maintenance, useful life and disposal



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of the equipment.

- **Respiratory Protection:** Respiratory protection training must be comprehensive, understandable, and recur annually, and more often if necessary, when respirators are used.

- **Lead and Noise:** Depending on results of the OSHA-required airborne lead dust and noise dosimetry, a shooting range may be required to train range staff annually on noise and lead hazards. At a minimum, range staff must be provided with the information contained in Appendices A and B of OSHA's lead standard if they are exposed to any airborne lead dust.

- **Fire Extinguisher, Fire Prevention and Emergency Action Plan:** Depending on your range's fire extinguisher policy, your range may need to provide fire extinguisher training and site-specific training on your range's fire prevention and emergency action plans.

### 4. BE PREPARED


Make sure your shooting range conducts the required assessments, develops the required written programs and provides the required training to your staff. Designate range supervisory staff who will act on your range's behalf should OSHA officers arrive for an inspection. Ensure your range's supervisory staff knows the location of your written safety programs and related records.

Follow these suggested “Do’s” and “Don’ts” during your OSHA inspection.

#### DO'S:

- Designate company representatives to act on your range's behalf during an OSHA inspection.
- Confirm the OSHA Compliance Officer's (CSHO) credentials and inspection purpose.
- Be courteous and polite to the OSHA Compliance Officer.
- Provide the inspector with the OSHA required documents when requested.
- Stick to the scope of the inspection.
- Take detailed notes and photos during the inspection.
- Correct any observed unsafe conditions.
- Ask questions.
- Communicate your range's PPE requirements to the OSHA CSHO.

#### DON'TS:

- Falsify records.
- Volunteer documents unless requested.
- Discriminate/retaliate against employees whom you may think have called OSHA.
- Give tours of your facility.
- Leave the OSHA CSHO unattended (unless they're conducting private employee interviews).
- Obstruct the inspection process.
- Argue or try to settle citations in the Closing Conference. 



BY TIM BARKER

## WHAT'S GOING TO BE HOT THIS YEAR?

# Trendspotting



**WE** find ourselves once again at that time of year when we look ahead and question what's in store for the industry. This time around, we're trying to get a head start on new or continuing trends in 2023.

How, we wondered, will gun shops be impacted by inflation, do-it-yourselfers and manufacturers' never-ending quest to increase handgun capacity? What will it take to energize the AR market?

And are we doing enough to engage new customers?

Of course, there's always difficulty in predicting the future. To help, we sought the opinions of several gun shops from around the country. Our panel: Jonathan Solomon, co-owner of Redstone Firearms in Burbank, Calif.; Jay Castaline, owner of Wyoming Guns in Homosassa, Fla.; and from Arnzen Arms in Eden Prairie, Minn., we have Mark Stevens, marketing consultant, and Matt Barnhart, NFA manager.

### CAPACITY WARS

Gunmakers are working overtime to come up with ways to put as many rounds as possible into handguns, both large and small. None of our panelists sees any reason to think this trend will change anytime soon, particularly when considering the success of two of the most popular micro compact handguns: Springfield Armory's Hellcat and SIG SAUER's P365.

Along with Smith & Wesson, those two companies have been

fighting to gain the upper hand in capacity. It's a trend being driven by customer appetites, suggested Castaline in Florida.

"They want as many rounds as they can get in the smallest gun they can get," he said.

Solomon, with Redstone Firearms, agrees. While most of his customers are hampered by California's magazine-capacity limits and the CA DOJ's "approved handgun roster" limitations, Solomon also does business with local law enforcement and customers from other states through online sales.

"Capacity is big for those who can get standard magazines, like our law enforcement and military guys," Solomon said. "If you're able to squeeze two or three more rounds into the same-sized weapon, it's a huge deal for those guys."

The success of the high-capacity guns is sure to drive the introduction of new models and new competitors in this arena (though none of our panelists expects GLOCK to change its ways). Still, there are limiting factors, suggested Stevens with Arnzen Arms.

"Now the real question is: How much more can you get into a gun?" he said, pointing to the P365-XMACRO, with its 17-round magazines. "That's a remarkable amount of firepower in a package not much larger than the P365 preceding it."

And, of course, the push to increase capacity isn't limited to compact carry guns. Last year saw the introduction of Springfield Armory's Prodigy line of double-stack 1911s, with 17-, 20 and 26-round magazines.

The 2011 is hardly new or cheap, with Staccato pioneering the category.

But this is the first time one of the industry's largest manufacturers has dipped a toe into these waters — offering guns in the more affordable \$1,500 to \$1,700 range.

Stevens likes the potential: "What what remains to be seen is can you do a \$1,600 version of that gun and have it be a great firearm? We'll find out in time."

## "NOW THE REAL QUESTION IS: HOW MUCH MORE CAN YOU GET INTO A GUN?"

**Mark Stevens**, Marketing Consultant  
*Arnzen Arms • Eden Prairie, Minnesota*

### WHAT'S UP WITH ARS?

Perhaps no firearm segment has been as volatile as the AR market over the past decade, with sales spikes prompted by mass shootings, political threats, civil unrest and COVID-19 fears. Could it heat up again in 2023?

Unfortunately, there's a lot to overcome, Castaline argued.

"The market is kind of saturated right now from what I'm seeing in my store," he said. "When the rioting and Coronavirus thing started, people bought up all the ARs they could handle."

Bolstering this idea is the tepid response we saw last year prior to a failed national legislative attempt to tighten access. The demand needle barely moved.

"We've been threatened

with banning of ARs so many times over the past couple of decades," said Barnhart, with Arnzen Arms, "all of the people who might be afraid of not being able to get an AR-15 already have one."

But the story could be decidedly different in California, Solomon said. The state is awaiting final resolution of a U.S. Supreme Court challenge of the state's 30-year-old assault weapons ban.

If things go as gun advocates hope, state residents could soon have access to AR-style rifles with features commonplace in other parts of the nation. California's "featureless" rifles rules prohibit pistol grips, thumbhole stocks, folding or telescoping stocks, forward pistol grips and flash suppressors.

Removal of the rule could make a significant impact. "If it happens, you're going to see a huge jump in AR sales in California," Solomon said.

### DIY ON THE RISE

Five years ago, Wyoming Guns started offering AR build classes. For \$750, customers spent the day with an instructor, learning the building basics.

"We did six people at a time every Saturday. And this particular class was booked solid for three years," Castaline explained. "When they left here, they had their gun and the tools to build another one."

Eventually, other stores in the area caught on and started offering similar classes. Then the market dried up. But not the appetite for customizing firearms — without having to involve a gunsmith.

Today, Castaline does brisk business offering all

sorts of accessories, including uppers and lowers for ARs as well as slides, barrels, springs and triggers for GLOCKS and other handguns. Customers who've bought nice rifles and handguns are often eager to put their own stamp on them and some want to build rifles from scratch.

"After they do one [AR build class], it's a sickness," he said, tongue in cheek. "They want to do another and another and another."

It's the same story in California, where Redstone carries a wide range of parts — including the shop's own line of slides and barrels — for both handguns and rifles. Often, customers will start with a less expensive version of a firearm, and then upgrade it over time.

"They make it what they want it to be," Solomon said.

The trend isn't quite as noticeable at Arnzen Arms, which is in an affluent suburb of Minneapolis.

"Our customers aren't particularly interested in saving a few dollars building their own guns," Stevens observed. "The vast majority are looking for a complete firearm."

Still, the shop does carry a full line of parts and upgrades, including fire-control units for the SIG P365 and SIG P320, slides and barrels, and anything a person might need to build an AR. There's little reason to think the do-it-yourself appetite will be going away.

"There's always this constant push. Somewhere between your fourth and fifth gun, you've got to modify one," Stevens joked.

### EMERGING MARKETS: CAN WE KEEP THEM?

In recent years, stores have seen a wide range of





◀ Arnzen Arms' Mark Stevens and Matt Barnhart say customer service will be key in setting their store apart from the competition in 2023.

to be a well-lit, friendly and comfortable environment for anyone to come to," Stevens said.

#### PREPARE FOR BUDGET-CONSCIOUS SHOPPING

With consumer prices rising around the nation, there are concerns about customers being priced out of some product lines.

## AMONG THE LINGERING QUESTIONS SURROUNDING THIS INFLUX IS WHETHER THESE SHOPPERS CAN BE CONVERTED INTO REPEAT CUSTOMERS AND FIREARM ENTHUSIASTS.

Castaline fears it may soon start hurting some shoppers. So far, he said, dealers have been able to offset rising prices by lowering their own margins. But there are limits to how far it can go.

Eventually, some people will find themselves stepping down in terms of the guns they can afford — instead

of buying a SIG SAUER or Smith & Wesson, they may have to look at less expensive alternatives, he said.

"The guy who makes \$25,000 a year, I think it's going to price him out of the marketplace," Castaline said, while noting dealers may need to counter by considering lower-priced options they don't typically carry.

Solomon worries this shift could impact the quality of guns customers are able to buy for self-defense.

"When you start doing that, you're restricting certain people to inexpensive weapons —and they may or may not function properly," he reasoned.

Ammo pricing also is likely to continue hurting the market, said Stevens. The price increases over the past few years are unlikely to go away. This could have a depressing effect on the industry, with some customers unable to shoot as much as they might like. It's particularly true for competition shooters who have seen their match costs skyrocket.

"Hopefully, some of this stuff settles down, but the reality is once a new tax or a price increase gets in place, it's very hard to undo it," Stevens said. "It's really hard to go backward." **S**

new customers, including first-time gun owners, women and minorities. Among the lingering questions surrounding this influx is whether these shoppers can be converted into repeat customers and firearms enthusiasts.

In Florida, Castaline has noticed a shift in demographics, particularly in terms of customer age. Before the recent time of chaos, most of his shoppers fell into the age range of 40–90, heavy on retirees. This has shifted dramatically over the past couple of years, with thousands of new customers in the 21–40 age range.

To keep them coming back, he emphasizes customer service and being helpful, even if there's no immediate return on investment.

"I train my staff to be kind and courteous," Castaline stated. "It's things like 'How are you? What can I do for you? Is there anything I can help you find?' And if we don't have it, we'll point them to someone who does. It may not pay off today, but it'll pay off tomorrow."

That stream of new customers is a welcome change to Solomon at Redstone.

"It tells us there are more

and more people realizing they have a right to self-defense, and they have the right to carry a firearm," he said, noting his store puts a particular emphasis on training.

Making those new customers feel welcome requires an honest effort, Solomon said. This means avoiding politics and other polarizing subjects unrelated to firearms.

"Inclusivity is huge right now," he noted. "You need to be able to provide service to everyone. It doesn't matter what race they are, what sex they are, what their orientation is or who they voted for."

Stevens, at Arnzen Arms, agrees.

"The number-one thing you can do is not treat anybody any different than anybody else who comes to the door," he said. "This has been the ethos of Arnzen Arms since the beginning."

It goes back to the experiences of Kate Arnzen, one of the company's owners. As a firearms enthusiast, she was often annoyed by gun shop experiences. Too many times, she would ask a question, only to watch a salesperson answer her husband instead of her.

"So, they started this place

Dealers, we want to hear from you: What segments are primed for a breakout this year? Do you see rising prices impacting consumer buying habits? How is your store standing out among diverse customer groups? Let the SI team know: [comments@shootingindustry.com](mailto:comments@shootingindustry.com).



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# OUTBOX BIG-BOX STORES

BY SHANNON FARLOW

**I**ndependent gun stores have always been the backbone of the shooting sports industry. Generations of hunters and shooting enthusiasts depended on their local gun shops for firearms and ammunition, shooting accessories and gear, trustworthy advice, training and more. Despite the rise of big-box chains and online competition, storefront firearms dealers across the country continue to thrive.

How are mom-and-pop gun stores successfully competing

with the large chains and online retailers? Which marketing channels and tactics are giving independent dealers an edge? What role does the in-store experience complete with in-person customer service play?

To get answers to these questions and more, we spoke with Jeff Poet, president of Jay's Sporting Goods in Clare, Mich.; Larry Hyatt, owner/president of Hyatt Guns in Charlotte, N.C.; and David Rich, owner and lead instructor at Naples Gun Shop & School in Naples, Fla. Miles Hall,

industry consultant with Hall-N-Hall consulting, also weighs in to share proven tips and advice that has helped countless gun stores.

**SI: How much competition does your store get from big-box chains and online retailers? How much of a threat are big boxes and online competitors?**

**Rich:** We get a lot of competition from the big-box stores, and much more from the online retailers. The online "shops" seem to make their profit from high

volume, low-price sales and drop ship directly from the distributors. This minimizes their overhead as many don't have the costs of keeping inventory, lease or building costs, higher insurance rates, etc. We regularly have customers wanting us to price match some online store selling the same firearm as us, but at \$10 over cost. If we did business like that, our costs would quickly overrun our profit, or lack thereof.

**Hyatt:** Big-box and online retailers remain a threat to small businesses like ours. It's important for us to understand the advantages of big box/online in the market and use our own advantages to counteract them. It's a tough job, and it keeps us very busy.

**Poet:** We get a fair amount of competition from big-box chains because our size and selection come close to what they stock. I believe today everyone gets a significant amount of competition from online. Both are as much of a threat as you let them be to your business.

**Hall:** All retailers are impacted by big-box locations. The reason is they are less intimidating to guests who simply feel they know what to expect as they walk in compared to a frontline dealer they have not been to yet. The unknown is a challenge, if you will.

**SI:** What's your secret to success against big-box and online competitors?

**Hyatt:** Customer service and product knowledge are our advantages over the big-box stores and online competitors. Most of our competitors in this space provide little in the way of customer service and many

big-box stores move their employees around quite a bit. We like to say, "Do you want to buy a gun from a guy who was selling fishing gear last week?" In the online space, we learned early on many of our online competitors didn't even return emails. So, we return emails, we return phone calls, we list our phone number prominently



**FOCUS ON WHAT YOU DO WELL AND MAKE IT BETTER. KNOW WHERE THOSE COMPETITORS ARE, BUT DON'T BE CONSUMED WITH WHERE THEY ARE PRICED. FOCUS MORE ON WHAT THE CUSTOMER IS EXPECTING FROM YOU AND DO ALL YOU CAN TO PROVIDE IT.**

**JEFF POET, PRESIDENT**  
JAY'S SPORTING GOODS • CLARE, MICH.



on our website, we process orders quickly and we always err on the side of customer satisfaction.

**Poet:** Giving our customers the best possible experience is the best defense to those competitors. Taking care of the customers coming in the door is paramount. There's a reason why they are coming in our store. We need to meet those expectations and not give them a reason to shop elsewhere.

**Rich:** In-person customer service, and the bonus with the correct licenses, the customer can have the firearm today, versus four or five days from now.

**Hall:** Service, smarts, smile, sincerity.

**SI:** How important is marketing to competing against big-box and online retailers?

**Poet:** Marketing is very important and we spend a fair amount of dollars in the arena. We need to be visible and the first thing they think of when they make the decision they need something.

**Rich:** It's tough. As a small

business, we don't have the ability to run ads on major TV networks. What makes it tougher is Facebook and Google restrict our ability to pay for advertising on their platforms. They won't even let us pay to advertise firearm safety classes.

**Hyatt:** Marketing is extremely important, whether it be keyword marketing on our internet properties, social media or the few outlets we have for advertising. Unfortunately, big-box stores have a huge advantage here because they can use many of the channels that don't allow gun advertising.

**Hall:** Critical. You are building a story and an image. The better and more you do it, the less important big boxes and online are.

**SI:** Which marketing channels and tactics work best for your store?

**Rich:** We pay for indoor billboard advertising. We have a 20-second ad that runs in something like 20 local businesses such as gyms, car washes and other venues. Per Facebook and Google, we're not allowed (by them) to pay for any advertising, so we rely on good Google reviews



David Rich says a "clean, professional-looking" store is part of his success in attracting and retaining customers. A variety of training classes help, as well.



and folks sharing whatever we post on Facebook.

**Hyatt:** Email marketing is our number-one channel. We've been gathering emails for a little over 15 years and the effect of our email blasts are nearly immediate. We're fortunate to have someone in charge of this who had many years of experience in event email marketing, so his work has been key to this success.

**Poet:** Even though we use most channels, we have shifted a lot of our budget to digital marketing. We try and customize by physical region and lean heavily on our own organic lists to target customers.

**Hall:** This varies around the country, but TV is still the go-to best bet. Social media today is TV on a more personal level. So, modifying the spots to impact the specific audience is doable.

**How important is the in-store experience for your customers?**

**Hyatt:** It's the most important aspect of our business. We did a study many years ago with one of our part-time employees. He traveled all over the country with his full-time job and made it a point to visit every gun shop he could. His experience with rude "gun shop attitudes" led us to double up on our efforts to greet people warmly and provide them the best customer service possible. We hire and train people who are already well-versed in the gun industry, so their knowledge helps us to provide factual information to our customers. Plus, I'm always walking around the store and checking on customers. This is not a business for absentee owners.

**Rich:** Vital. It's that's simple.

Many customers tell us they simply "want a gun," with little or no other knowledge about what they want. Our face-to-face interaction gives us the opportunity to direct them to something that may be better for them and their intended use.

**Poet:** In-store experience is very important because it give us a first impression with our customers and it's what can separate us from the competition.

**Hall:** Critical. The customers are actually your guest. You invited them in so make it great and memorable. Treat them well and they will do the same. The team with a servant's heart, the spirit and who look sharp is in keeping

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**WE LEARNED  
EARLY ON MANY  
OF OUR ONLINE  
COMPETITORS  
DIDN'T EVEN  
RETURN EMAILS.  
SO, WE RETURN  
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AND WE ALWAYS  
ERR ON THE SIDE  
OF CUSTOMER  
SATISFACTION.**  
”

**LARRY HYATT, OWNER/PRESIDENT  
HYATT GUNS • CHARLOTTE, N.C.**



To maintain a good relationship with top manufacturers, Jeff Poet gives them good placement in the store and maintains an assortment of SKUs to support them.

with what makes frontline dealers the leaders in the industry. Oh, and you make more money, too.

**SI:** What's your approach to your store's layout and displays?

**Poet:** We try and merchandise strategically so whatever is in season we have front and center as soon as our customer comes in the door. We try to set the tone with thought-out, quality-looking displays. We keep some of this space "free" so no one category owns it and it allows us to change things quickly and often to give a fresh look each time a customer comes in.

**Rich:** Not sure if it sets us apart, but we strive to keep the store clean and professional-looking. We get compliments on our store and inventory regularly.

**Hyatt:** Merchandising is really an art form and we're blessed to have a creative

staff. Our store is a bit old and dusty, but it's really part of our charm. We display as many guns as possible and this really sets us apart from other stores. We carry significantly more inventory than most shops, even the big-box folks, and I think it really sets us apart.

**Hall:** Eye level, easy to read and see. The better, cleaner, professional and inviting, the better your sales.

**SI:** Do the brands you carry help make you more competitive against big-box and online competition?

**Hyatt:** Absolutely. We like to position ourselves as a "gun specialty store," so this means we carry a lot of brands many stores cannot afford. For example, we try to carry a large number of left-handed guns. This helps us to serve a part of the gun-buying public many stores forget about.

**Poet:** We put an emphasis on



those who give us special support and try to keep us competitive with those competitors. This emphasis focuses from placement in the store, to width and depth we purchase from them.

**Hall:** Yes! Big boxes only carry a set or formula they think works. Frontline dealers are the *only* ones who truly bring the industry to the world. Big boxes live off of it and add little to it.

**SI:** What manufacturers do a good job supporting the storefront dealer with point-of-purchase displays or employee education and reward programs?

**Rich:** Some do, others not so much. GLOCK is great at offering armorer and other classes to employees of stocking dealers. Smith & Wesson recently began a program to reward store employees with a free firearm with so many sales, as well as a discounted handgun.

**Hyatt:** Springfield Armory is number-one in this. First off, Springfield offers an exemplary product line that covers nearly every facet of the gun space. Springfield also has an excellent training program and its rewards program is second to none. Sales associates are more likely to push Springfield for these reasons and it's one of our best-selling brands every year.

**Poet:** The optic vendors we have probably focus the most on POP/education/reward programs. It does tend to be those manufacturers that have higher technical products and need the details explained.

**Hall:** Lots of manufacturers now offer such things. For special items, giveaways, help with advertising funds you need to ask. We found presenting the plan and expectations was key to their support. Ask and you may just get it.

**SI:** Do MAP policies help your business?

**Poet:** Absolutely MAP pricing helps if the MAP gives a decent margin. If it doesn't give a decent margin, it can hurt as much as it helps. Most of the time we just want a level playing

field and we feel we can add value to the product with our staff or processes.

**Rich:** Absolutely! Enforced MAP policies help level the playing field with online-only companies.

**Hyatt:** We're big fans of MAP policies if they are enforced. Many manufacturers with a MAP policy don't do a very good job of enforcing violations and it puts us in a conundrum. Obviously, we have to follow market forces when it comes to pricing and if several dealers are putting out pricing below MAP, we have to follow suit.

**Hall:** You bet it does. Look for and support those companies that do and enforce MAP. They truly understand the big picture and care for the frontline dealers.

**SI:** What advice would you offer other retailers for beating big-box and online competitors?

**Hyatt:** Put your customers first. We're in the customer service business as well as the gun business. Communicate with your customers, give them a great experience and they will usually come back to you, even if your price is a little higher.

**Poet:** Focus on what you do well and make it better. Know where those competitors are, but don't be consumed with where they are priced. Focus more on what the customer is expecting from you and do all you can to provide it.

**Rich:** This is a tough one. The online social media presences have targeted the brick-and-mortar stores, yet allow the big-box shops to advertise. The best we can work toward is a good customer experience in our store that hopefully will lead to a lot of personal recommendations to our store.

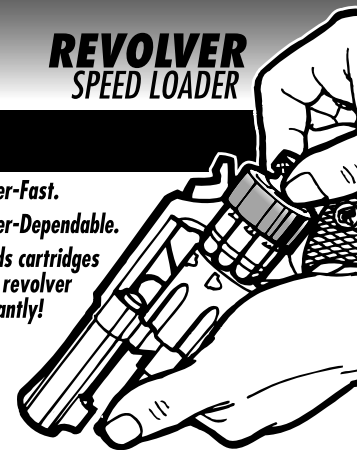
**Hall:** Work to become the easy-to-get-to, easy-to-talk-with and easy-to-buy-from store. Coupled with the right spirit and servant's heart, you will be the center of the shooting sports world in your area. **SI**

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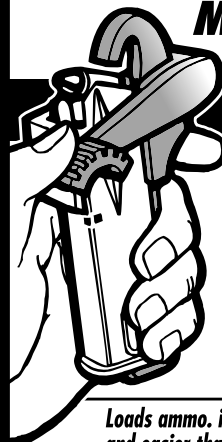
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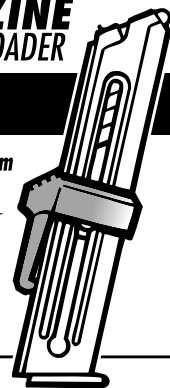
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# 2023 INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

By Rob Southwick, Nancy Bacon  
& Ben Scuderi



**D**espite grumblings from some corners, 2022 was strong from a historical perspective. On track to be the third highest year ever recorded for NICS background checks (at the time of publication in mid-December) sales are only exceeded by wildly crazy 2020 and 2021.

Where sales will go in 2023 is the multi-million-dollar question. Let's tackle this question by first reviewing industry-specific trends in 2022, followed by current macroeconomic conditions and ending with our 2023 predictions.

## CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS DRIVING PURCHASE DECISIONS

According to RetailBI powered by Gearfire, which

has 2,400+ retailers reporting data, year-to-date October same-store independent retailer sales of ammunition and firearms declined 24% and 13%, respectively, compared to 2021. At the same time, inventories have increased, up 5% for firearms and 38% for ammunition — likely reducing orders at the wholesale and manufacturing levels. Unlike 2020–2022, prices remained generally stable. However, regardless of actual manufacturers' shipments and retail inventory trends, consumer perceptions — not facts — drive purchasing decisions.

When it comes to ammunition, multiple factors impact demand (see p. 37). All through 2022, inflation — both ammunition-specific price increases as well as

economy-wide inflation — drove people to purchase less ammunition. It's the top reason for falling demand. Concerns about ammunition shortages remained confused, with nearly the same percentage of consumers buying more and buying less for this reason. Domestic politics was the top motivator for buying more, followed by acquisition of a new firearm, safety concerns and, as we predicted earlier this year, global unrest round off the top concerns boosting ammunition demand. Lingering perceptions of supply shortages are still driving sales, but is the fifth-ranked factor for boosting sales, followed by economic uncertainty.

Despite some softening, ammunition demand continues to show greater strength than firearms. From October 2021 through October 2022 (see p. 38), there was a steady decline in the percentage of ammunition consumers reporting their personal ammunition inventories were too low. However, more than half (53%) of respondents to Southwick Associates' quarterly industry monitoring survey indicate they still want more ammunition, compared to 70% of respondents in October 2021. The strong demand for ammunition is diminishing, though at a lesser rate than experienced by firearms.

Consumers also see retail firearm inventories as improving. As of October 2022, 82% of shooting equipment consumers tracked by Southwick Associates report retail availability of firearms is steady or increasing versus

59% a year earlier.

Just like ammunition, consumers' perceptions and demand for firearms are driven by more than just supply concerns (see p. 39). By the end of October, the top three factors driving firearm sales were safety concerns, domestic politics and, as predicted earlier this year, global unrest. Inflation, which increases people's concerns to obtain life's basics, are having the greatest negative impact on sales, followed by economic issues — including job safety and changes in personal income. Perceived firearm shortages are the fourth highest factor depressing sales. As shown on p. 39, inflation has both positive and negative impacts on firearm demand, with a slightly greater negative impact overall.

Consumer perceptions of economic conditions have shifted significantly in 2022. In April 2022, only 10% of consumers indicated interest in purchasing a firearm was reduced due to economic uncertainty. However, by October 22% of consumers cited economic uncertainty as a major concern, with inflation becoming the biggest factor reducing firearm demand, up from 16% in April. This clearly illustrates that economic factors are weakening consumer demand for firearms as well as ammunition. We expect this concern and trend to continue into 2023.

## FIREARM, ACCESSORY SALES TRENDS

Firearms sales are best tracked using the FBI's NICS data. While 2022 NICS data are trending below 2021, per top chart on p. 39, they show sales in 2022 were still

well above 2019's pre-COVID levels. 2022 is on track to be the third best year ever for firearm retail sales. While this is a strong insight, concerns across the industry are justifiably focused on when the declines will level off.

Insights are also available for some accessory sales. Recent consumer segmentation research available from Southwick Associates explored firearms consumers' purchase journey, including accessories. Results show firearm purchases are most frequently accompanied with ammunition, safety and storage gear purchases. In the months following their firearm purchases, consumers come back for accessories, either for dressing up their firearm, improving their skill or for enhancing their shooting and ownership experience.

In 2020–21, likely due to the increase in first-time purchasers, as well as return

customers buying what they can, it appears a larger proportion of consumers were buying accessories at the same time as their firearm purchases. As firearm demand recedes, accessory sales will likely fall back to pre-2020 levels with greater percentages being purchased in the months following a firearm purchase versus at the time of purchase.

## OUR PREDICTION FOR 2023? HEADWINDS THAT REDUCE DEMAND WILL DOMINATE.

As for specific accessories, Southwick Associates' quarterly industry monitoring survey

indicates the percentage of hunters and target shooters purchasing optics has fallen behind 2020–21 levels, while reloading purchases are starting to increase, likely due to increasing inventory levels. Additional insights are available from Southwick Associates.

Though firearm imports have eased slightly from their peaks in mid-2021, they remain well ahead of previous record highs in 2016, 2014 and 2012. Imports in excess of current consumer demand is necessary to help restore retail and wholesale inventories depleted in 2020 and 2021.

However, we must be careful about bringing in too much, based on the excess issues associated with the famous "Trump Slump" years of 2017–2019. It appears the trade has already taken notice of building inventories and is closely managing them through discounts and other steps, in part with the insights

now available from emerging inventory monitoring services.

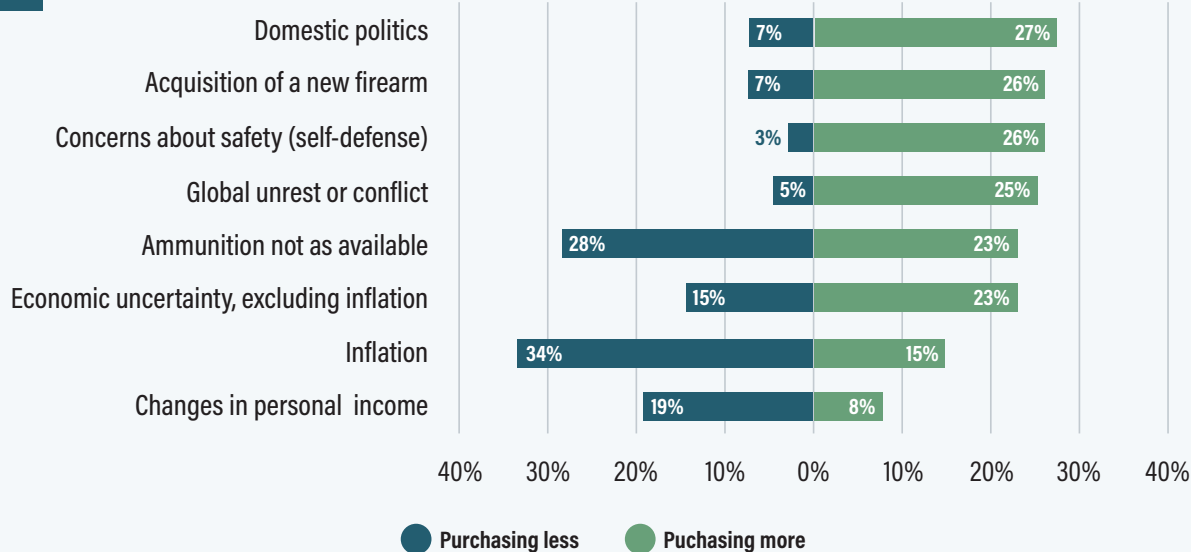
### MACRO ISSUES

All industries and business sectors are impacted by outside forces. From unemployment to inflation, the firearms and accessories market is no different. Federal and private sector economists across the board are expecting a recession in 2023, if we're not already in one now.

That said, we must be cautious and not compare the possible upcoming recession to previous recessions, since inflation is a significant factor for the first time since the 1970s. Unemployment remains unusually low, and while it will increase, it likely won't reach levels seen in recent recessions. Though low rates of unemployment typically translate to greater consumer spending, inflation is increasingly suppressing this advantage

## FACTORS AFFECTING AMMUNITION PURCHASES

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by simultaneously reducing consumer demand and eroding manufacturer and retailer margins.

Another of many potential indicators of future sales is consumer debt. As of October 2022, credit card debt levels have returned to pre-pandemic levels, indicating consumers have less ability to spend like they did in 2021 and 2022. Likewise, with people returning to pre-pandemic activities, sales associated with recreational activities such as target shooting and hunting that surged during 2020's various closures are also returning to "normal" levels.

Year after year, a top driver of firearm and ammo sales is political uncertainty. When elected officials talk about restricting the public's ability to buy firearms and ammunition, sales increase. People want to buy before losing the right or ability to do so in the near future. With Republicans gaining control in the House of

Representatives, political rhetoric regarding additional sales restrictions will decline, thus reducing demand.

### FINAL CALL

Our prediction for 2023? Compared to 2022, headwinds that reduce demand will slightly dominate. Republicans gained control of the House, but barely. This will cause consumer concerns about future sales restrictions to ease somewhat — except in generally blue states and cities where pushes for greater restrictions on firearm sales and ownership will continue.

While inflation hasn't appeared to reduce overall consumer demand much, simultaneously, consumers are gradually becoming aware of increased product availability at the retail level, which will reduce demand versus 2022. Firearm sales will ease but considering safety concerns associated with the potential recession and global military

concerns, sales will not ease significantly. We expect 2023's firearm sales to be in the ballpark of 2017 levels (Figure 4), which is above 2019's sales volume.

These factors will accelerate discounting trends that began in 2022, likely dropping average firearm prices. Ammunition demand will also shrink though not as quickly as firearm sales. Manufacturers will likely feel the worse of it, as increasing retailer inventories will further reduce replenishment orders in 2023.

Predictions regarding accessory sales in 2023 is difficult. There's no precedent to draw from, considering a recession is possibly accompanied simultaneously with lower-than-normal unemployment rates and rapid inflation. At this time, we suggest accessories demand will probably mirror firearms sales, as measured by NICS data. Efforts to encourage owners to shoot more often will certainly

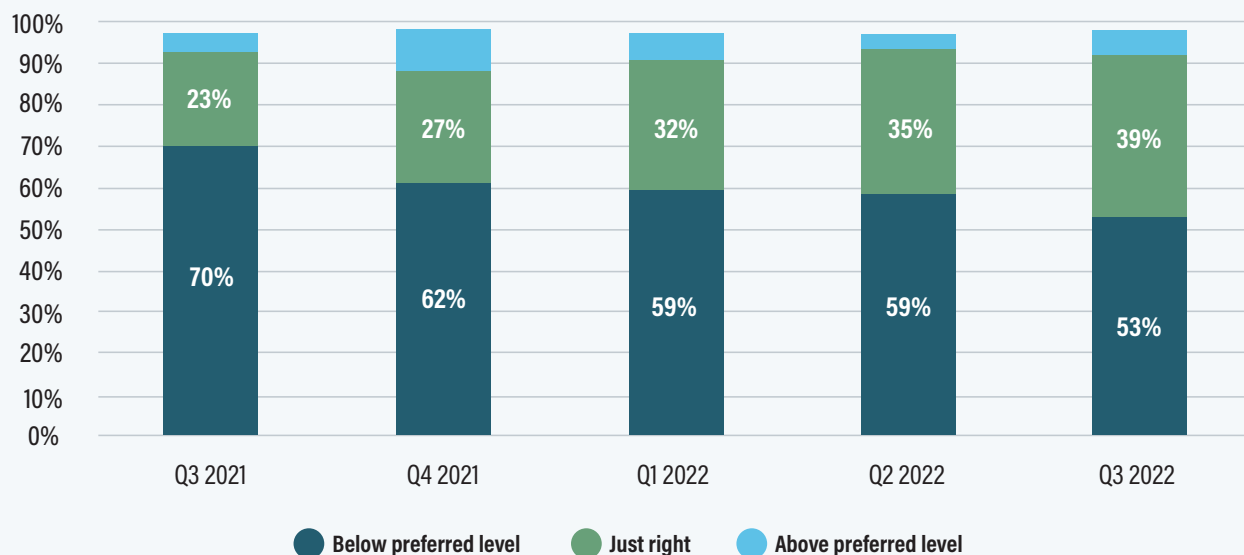
result in additional accessory sales.

Opportunities to create greater tailwinds exist. For many of our consumers, especially recreational shooters, firearm owners and target shooting is a way of life, and their numbers have grown in recent years. If they have income, shooting participation levels should continue, driving sales of our sector's durable and consumable products.

These people, especially new shooting sports participants, are our best recruiters of new firearm and ammo consumers. Do what you can to promote time at the range to not only help encourage our current customers to shoot more often, but to also help support newly recruited customers. **SI**

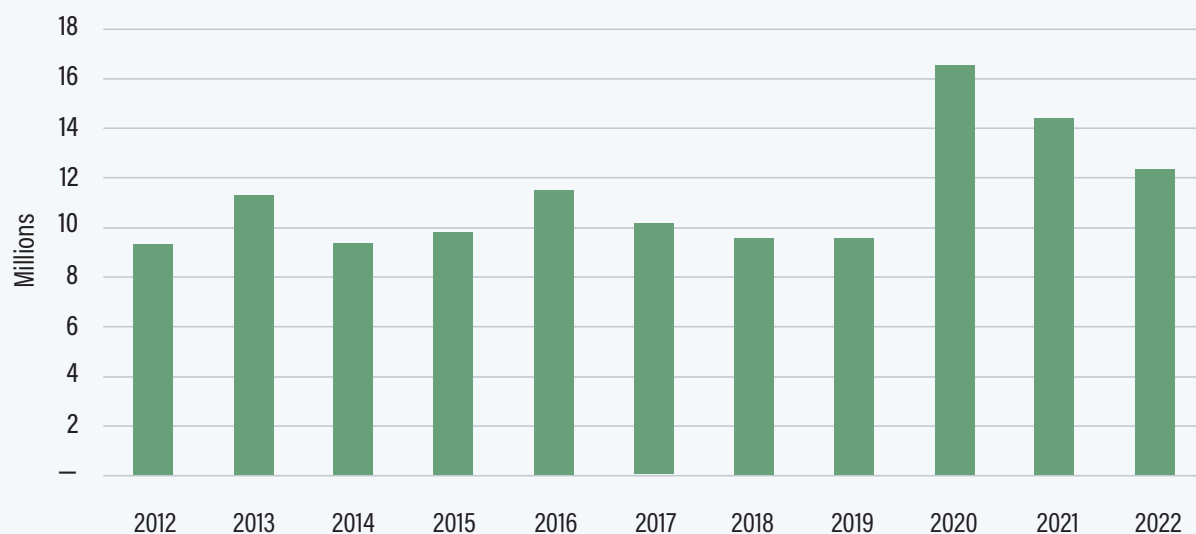
To order the report, or to ask questions, contact Nancy Bacon at [Nancy@SouthwickAssociates.com](mailto:Nancy@SouthwickAssociates.com).

## DESIRED LEVELS OF PERSONAL AMMUNITION INVENTORY



## NUMBER OF NCIS BACKGROUND CHECKS

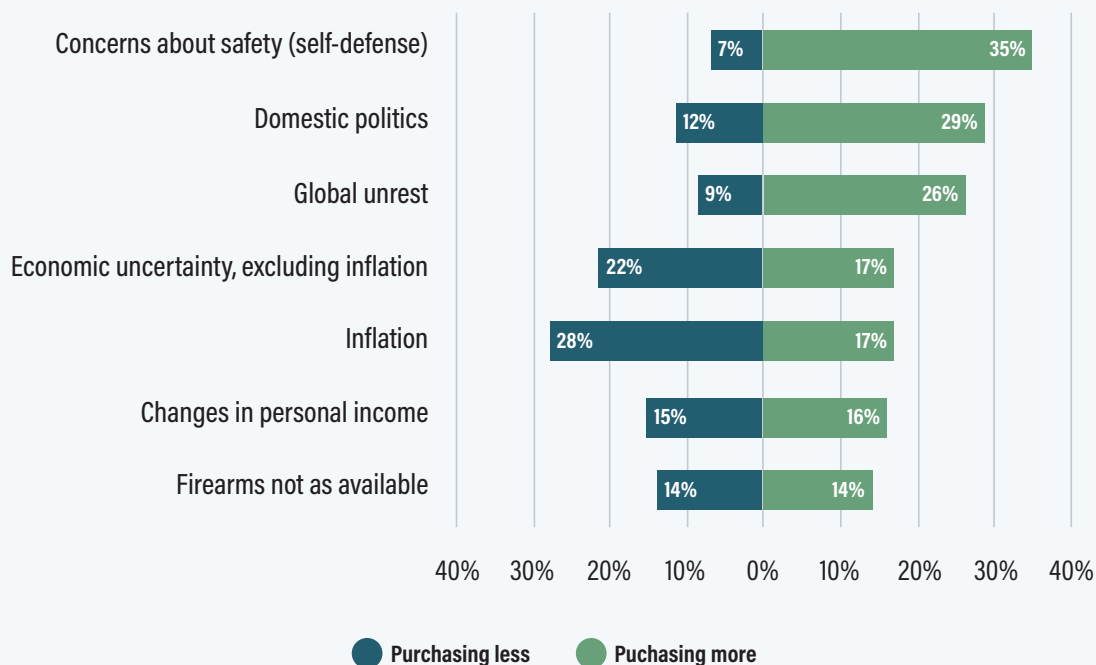
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## FACTORS AFFECTING FIREARM PURCHASES

Q3 '22





Bring Happiness Back Into Ownership,  
While Strengthening Your Team

# To Delegate Or Not To Delegate?



By Hank Yacek

**A**ll too often, I hear from friends, customers or family how amazing it must be to own my own business and the freedom to do what I want when I want.

My typical reply usually sounds something like this: “Absolutely; owning my own business gives me the freedom to choose which 80 hours a week I will work!”

So yes, being in control of your own destiny has a strong attraction for many, but even the most dedicated of us eventually gets to a point where we want to shed some of the burden of running a business and focus on the aspects that gave us the inspiration to start the business in the first place. When we mire ourselves down in mundane tasks we are either not good at or despise we can start to resent our own business. Once resentment starts to creep into our way of being, it can start an owner on the path of significant decline in business performance.

## A “HORRIBLE” (OR HELPFUL) WORD?

The alternate path to thwart this regression is to explore the roles you fill, the tasks you perform and the responsibilities you have and do a “ask analysis.” Not only will this journey help you get a grasp on all the things done to keep your business running, but it will also help you “honest up” and see what delegation opportunities there

are. Yes, I said it, the horrible word — “*delegation*.” We all struggle to delegate tasks because as business owners we feel our business is at risk if a task isn’t performed to a high standard, so we just do it ourselves. What we are really doing here is twofold.

1. We often perform tasks we avoid until the last moment, invest minimal time because we aren’t fully invested in the task or deliver a subpar product because we just aren’t the best at it or, even, worse all three at the same time.
2. We deny our staff the opportunity to show off their abilities to carry out these same tasks and grow as well as improve overall business.

## RUN A TASK ANALYSIS

So how do we get out of this cycle and start giving team members the chance to grow and shine in our business? First, fully commit to bringing delegation into your way of doing business. Second is to run a “task analysis.” Here’s how.

1. Make a list of all the tasks, without question, you're the only person who can act upon. There's no way to delegate these tasks if you're the only person who can perform them.
2. Reread the list and be honest. Quite likely there are other people who can perform these tasks in your organization.
3. Once you've confirmed your "Only I can do these things" list, set it aside.

Now it is time for phase two. Make a thorough task list of the things you perform other team members can perform as well. Once you have it, break the list down into two categories: the tasks you *enjoy* doing and the tasks you *don't enjoy* doing.

Take the two lists and break them down again into two more categories: tasks you're good at and those tasks you struggle with.

There are now four categories of tasks:

1. Tasks I enjoy and I'm good at.
2. Tasks I enjoy, but struggle with.
3. Tasks I don't enjoy, but I'm good at.
4. Tasks I don't enjoy and I struggle with.

#### **"TASKS I ENJOY AND I'M GOOD AT."**

These are the tasks that not only you enjoy, but do extremely well because you don't mind putting a lot of time and effort into them. These tasks recharge your batteries instead of depleting them. These are quite likely things that brought you to opening this business in the first place.

Cherish these tasks and keep them as part of your routine. At their core, these are the things that elevate enjoyment and give you the drive to succeed.

#### **"TASKS I ENJOY, BUT STRUGGLE WITH."**

This is where you can find personal satisfaction in growing your skill set. Because you enjoy the task, you'll dedicate the time and effort to learning and improving your ability

to perform it. These tasks also add energy to the day and satisfaction to your work.

It's a wonderful opportunity to delegate to your team to see if someone can mentor you and improve your skill set. By leaning on your team for personal growth, it gives them the pride and satisfaction of helping improve the business (and likely is a task that falls in their own "Tasks I enjoy and I'm good at" list) as well as promoting a supportive and growth-oriented store culture.



**How do we get out of this cycle and start giving team members the chance to grow and shine in our business? First, fully commit to bringing delegation into your way of doing business.**

#### **"TASKS I DON'T ENJOY, BUT I'M GOOD AT."**

The roles reverse here — you should delegate the task to another team member, and *you* become the mentor to grow their skill set and help them become a more valuable employee. Resist the urge to hold on to these tasks simply because you're good at them. See yourself more as the backup person for this task instead of the primary.

Unenjoyable tasks drain the energy and enjoyment of running your business. Search and explore

for team members where these tasks squarely fall into their "Tasks I enjoy and I'm good at" list and delegate it to them. When you do this consistently, not only will you develop a more competent team but improve their job satisfaction at the same time.

#### **"TASKS I DON'T ENJOY AND STRUGGLE WITH."**

Three words come to mind here. Delegate, delegate, delegate! These are the tasks you should avoid like the plague. When you come to the crossroads of poor skill set and task hatred, you'll never see these tasks done to any level of quality unless you hand them off to other enthusiastic and competent team members. These tasks quickly drain your energy and build resentment to a workday. Export them to someone else as soon as possible!

#### **THE ULTIMATE GOAL**

Once you've run through this list, you may come to a stark conclusion there are some tasks that just can't be delegated. This could be from a lack of skilled staff available, the desire to take on the task or both. If so, now's the time to train or hire! Exercises like this one will give you a clear definition of the roles a person will perform to fill the gap in your current team.

Lastly, and arguably most importantly, through this exploration you may discover "ownership-type tasks" all fall outside of the "Tasks I enjoy" column. This is completely okay. Many highly successful businesses are owned by someone who does not run the business day to day.

Coming to an understanding about yourself, accepting you need to hire someone to run the business and relegating yourself to the tasks that keep you enthusiastic about the business will likely accelerate the process of growing it.

The key here is to be honest, act and grow the team consistently. If you can, you'll quickly find delegating leads to happiness beyond expectations! **\$**



BY ASHLEY MCGEE

# Market Smarter, Not Harder



## 2023 Digital Marketing Trends Every Range & Retailer Needs To Know

**In** last month's issue, we shared why traditional marketing tactics still have a place in your overall marketing strategy, but there's no denying digital has changed — and continues to influence — the sales and marketing landscape.

According to IAB research on advertising spend and revenue, digital media accounts for over three-quarters of total media budgets in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> In 2022, digital ad spend worldwide was estimated at \$441

billion and is projected to reach \$485 billion this year.<sup>2</sup>

There are so many tactics and strategies that fall under the larger, ever-growing digital marketing umbrella it has become increasingly important for ranges and retailers to evaluate and prioritize which ones they spend their resources on. To help, here are the most notable trends to consider:

### DATA PRIVACY MATTERS

In 2023, data privacy will become even more critical as people look to protect their personal information and only share it with companies they trust.

After pushing back its timeline (again), Google is set to phase out third-party cookies in 2024. No, not chocolate chip cookies, but the small pieces of text sent to a browser by every website a user visits.

From a user standpoint, cookies help a website remember information about your visit to make it easier to visit again and make the site more useful to you. Marketers, however, have long used cookies to identify what their audience's interests are based on browsing activity, purchases and preferences. The information is then used improve the user experience and delivered targeted ads.

"Privacy concerns coupled with consumer protection legislation will have a huge impact on how to potentially advertise to new consumers," said Charles Anderson, CEO of GAT Marketing, a full-service traditional and digital marketing agency focused on the firearms industry. "The issue is compounded by the firearm industry's limited access to Google, Facebook, etc."

For those who haven't already, 2023 should be spent developing a plan for how your business is going to effectively market in a cookie-less world. We'll give you a hint — collect and protect as much first-party data as you can.

## EMAIL MARKETING REIGNS SUPREME

First-party data is any data collected directly by the organization, which can include information collected from website behavior, lead generation campaigns, surveys, social media, or even customer service/sales conversations. But, given the return on investment (ROI) of email marketing, email addresses are without a doubt considered the holy grail of first-party data.

Email marketing is a low-cost, high-return method. For every \$1 spent on email marketing, you can expect an average return of \$36 — a higher return than you can expect from any other form of marketing, digital or otherwise.<sup>3</sup> For retail, e-commerce and consumer goods or services, the ROI can be as much as \$45 for every \$1 spent.<sup>4</sup>

"Today's curated email newsletter is the number-one most successful marketing campaign. Why? Because it's affordable, easy to manage, direct to the customer and provides almost instant feedback," said Laura Burgess,

founder and president of Laura Burgess Marketing (LBM), which provides public relations and marketing communications to companies within the firearms industry.

If this isn't enough to convince you, Ashley Gall, LBM CFO and VP of marketing and events, pointed to the following statistics.

***For every \$1  
spent on email  
marketing, you  
can expect an  
average return of  
\$36 — a higher  
return than you  
can expect from  
any other form of  
marketing, digital  
or otherwise.***

HubSpot's Blog Research of 2021 found of the B2C marketers they interviewed, 87% were using an automated email campaign platform with an astounding 50% of their customers making purchases due to these emails (SalesCycle 2022 report). SalesCycle also documented 59% of email newsletter respondents reported email influenced their purchase. And a 2021 report from Statista suggests email is the leading way consumers find coupons or promotions on their favorite brands.

"Just a couple hours a month with a small budget and your range or store can reach out and touch your customers at least once a month in a friendly, personal way that will demonstrate your commitment to them and your brand," Burgess and Gall said.

## VIDEO CONTINUES TO OUTPERFORM

People are watching more video online than ever before. In one minute, viewers around the world spend 1 million hours streaming video, making video content a priority for marketers this year.<sup>5</sup>

In 2022, 86% of businesses used video as a marketing tool — a 25% increase from 2016.<sup>6</sup> Why? Not only do videos grab attention, but they also keep it. Because they can combine movement, sound and text, videos can pack a lot of information into a smaller package.

A simple Google search for "video ads vs. static" will return pages of results from various digital marketing experts who have conducted A/B tests all yielding the same results — video ads are more effective.

In analyzing the most recent 676 million video and display impressions (676,698,958 to be exact) the Topple research team found video click-through rates (CTR) were nearly 16X higher than static display advertising. However, on the flip side, display advertising remains significantly more efficient with cost-per-clicks (CPC) 65% less expensive than video.

According to the team at Topple, the best strategy appears to include a combination of both highly engaging video ads paired with highly efficient display ads.

## NANO & MICRO INFLUENCERS DELIVER

Like it or not, influencer marketing is here to stay. What was once only used by a handful of forward-thinking marketers in select consumer product segments is now being used by almost every business with a digital presence.

In 2023, ranges and retailers should spend time learning the ins and outs of influencer marketing, as today's content creators can generate a significant ROI for those who collaborate with them.

According to Aspire's 2022 State of Influencer Marketing report, 70% of brands are working with nano and micro influencers to leverage their highly engaged audiences and low cost per engagement.<sup>7</sup> Nano influencers consistently achieve the highest



engagement rate, with an average of 3.69% — more than double the engagement rate of both the macro influencers (1.61%) and the mid-tier influencers (1.62%).

“Not everyone realizes it’s not about the size of a content creator’s following, but their relevance to your audience,” said Jeff Dillow, account director of TREAD Agency, which provides digital marketing services for shooting sports, fishing, boating, overland, off-road and other outdoor market segments.

For those thinking this all sounds like a foreign language, there’s a reason why. Influencer marketing is a relatively newer marketing strategy. The term “influencer” wasn’t even added to the dictionary until mid-2019.

Here’s what you need to know: Nano influencers are defined as those with between 1,000 and 10,000 followers; micro influencers have an audience of 10,000 to 100,000 followers and macro influencers have 100,000 up to 1 million followers. Mega influencers, such as most celebrities, boast more than 1 million followers.

For brands, nano and micro influencers offer quite a bit of bang for the buck.

“In many cases, we’re seeing a 10–11X return on investment over banner ads,” said Dan Kahn, president of TREAD Agency. “Their audiences tend to be more engaged and are more likely to take action.”

In the case of independently owned ranges and retailers, finding relevant influencers isn’t as difficult as one might think. From the 2A advocate suburban soccer mom who shares lifestyle content on Instagram to the range regular you often see filming videos for his YouTube channel, influencers are all around you.

“Look for an influencer you can grow together with,” said Kahn. “The key is making sure it’s not a surface-level transactional relationship, but instead, an authentic and mutually beneficial long-term partnership.”

You may even consider looking within your own four walls. A growing trend within influencer marketing that stems from the demand for more authentic content is the desire to see an increase in employee-driven or

employee-based content. User-generated content can significantly impact sales and how brands are perceived; it only makes sense for brands to begin treating their own employees as influencers through employee advocacy programs.

### AI IS THE FUTURE ... AND THE PRESENT

The artificial intelligence (AI) market is expected to be worth \$36.8 billion by 2025.<sup>8</sup>

In an article for the Digital Marketing Institute, Dan Hughes wrote, “The widespread adoption of AI was once considered a far-fetched notion dreamed up in sci-fi stories, but it’s now a living, breathing part of our everyday reality.”

*From the 2A advocate suburban soccer mom who shares lifestyle content on Instagram to the range regular you often see filming videos for his YouTube channel, influencers are all around you.*

We’re not suggesting you replace your staff with robots. After all, people are what help set you apart from the big-box and online-only retailers. But certain AI tools, like email automation and chatbots, can help you serve your customers more efficiently.

Sixty-seven percent of internet users have used social media, live chat or texting to contact customer service, with 56% of customers reporting they prefer to message rather than call customer service.<sup>9</sup> Because of the prevalence of

technology like smartphones and Wi-Fi, people expect their messages to be answered promptly. Thirteen percent of U.S. consumers expect brands to respond within the first hour of reaching out on social media, while 76% expect a response in the first 24 hours.<sup>10</sup>

Take the time to setup quality automated messages for both email and social media and email. At the very least, the automated message should assure the customer you’ve received their request and let them know when they can expect a response. You can also set up automated responses based on frequently asked questions.

With many businesses struggling to respond in a timely manner, or even responding at all, integrating AI into your digital marketing strategy can set you apart from the competition.

### SMARTER, NOT HARDER

No matter what marketing strategies you decide to focus on in 2023, the important thing is you make a plan and stick with it. It’s easy to push tasks like filming video or taking photos, sending out an email newsletter or monitoring your social media accounts for customer comments and messages to the back burner, especially for small businesses. But guess what? Embracing the digital tools at your disposal can help you market smarter, not harder. **SI**

Interested in a deeper dive into one or more of the topics mentioned in this article? Let us know. Email [editor@shootingindustry.com](mailto:editor@shootingindustry.com).

#### Footnotes:

1. [iab.com/topics/ad-revenue](https://iab.com/topics/ad-revenue)
2. [insiderintelligence.com/content/global-digital-ad-spending-update-q2-2020](https://insiderintelligence.com/content/global-digital-ad-spending-update-q2-2020)
3. [constantcontact.com/blog/email-marketing-statistics](https://constantcontact.com/blog/email-marketing-statistics)
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By Carolee Anita Boyles

Image: freshidea / Adobe Stock

# Overcoming A Difficult Retail Environment

**O**wning a retail store of any kind has been challenging the past few years. Supply chain issues, COVID shutdowns and restrictions and rising transportation costs are only a few of the problems store owners have faced. Add in the legal and regulatory requirements of selling firearms, and you have a retail environment with plenty of difficulties to overcome.

## THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Anthony Puglia, owner of Puglia's Sporting Goods in Metairie, La., said acquiring inventory continues to be a problem for him. He hasn't been able to entirely solve this problem, but he has improved the situation.

"The way I get more inventory in a timely manner has been to increase my purchasing power through my buying

groups," he shared. Puglia is a member of Nation's Best Sports (NBS) and takes advantage of their shows and other buying opportunities.

"Generally, we go twice a year to their show in Fort Worth, Texas," he explained. "All the major manufacturers are there."

Puglia always attends the NBS Semi-Annual Markets so he can see manufacturers whose sales reps don't visit his store. Now he takes it a step farther: Puglia goes into the show with a list of what he wants from each manufacturer, not just in the near term, but farther out.

"Not only do I place an order, I place future orders," he noted. "This way, I'm sure I'm in line for the product when it does become available."

Puglia is also relying more on sales reps who come into his store.

"If you place two orders in a year

from a manufacturer, you only speak to the rep a couple of times a year," he said. "Now, I'm more personable with the reps. I rely on them more than ever. They have really stepped up and helped us out tremendously."

## A LITTLE CREATIVITY WITH ONLINE RAFFLES

At We Kick Brass in Royal Palm Beach, Fla., Owner Dawn Westendorf shared one of her biggest problems over the past few months has been the economy. Even though the decision to purchase a firearm is often for someone's safety, many customers still are reluctant to spend money.

"With gas prices, the cost of groceries and everything else being so expensive, we've had to be a little more creative," she said.

Westendorf is doing a lot of marketing online and coming up with innovative ways to drive sales. One of Westendorf's ideas was an online raffle.

"We created a Facebook group where we raffle off a gun or a suppressor or whatever it may be," she informed. "Not everyone can afford an \$800 gun, but they may be able to throw in \$20 for a chance to win an expensive gun."

While the raffles are fun for customers, the store must observe certain restrictions and limitations on how they run raffles.

"We have to stay within legal bounds," Westendorf said. "For example, there's a limit on how many tickets you can sell per item we're raffling."

Another restriction is We Kick Brass can sell raffle tickets only until they reach the MSRP of the firearm; at that point, they must cut off sales.

"We can't sell tickets for anything more than the MSRP of the item," Westendorf added.

## LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

At Ultimate Defense in St. Peters, Mo., Managing Director Paul Bastean noted product availability continues to be an issue.

"I think many manufacturers have focused on what sells really quickly and they haven't made their full line of product," he observed. "We have customers coming in who want specialty products that are just

not available. We had a guy in today who wanted a Springfield M1A, and it's one of those things we still can't go to a wholesaler and buy. It's been several years since we've been at a point where we can order from a wholesaler and get something in within a few days."

Even more of a problem than product availability, according to Bastean, is competition from online retailers. Many customers have switched from purchasing firearms in a store to buying online because they have the

66

***It's been several years since we've been at a point where we can order from a wholesaler and get something in within a few days."***

**Paul Bastean, Managing Director**  
Ultimate Defense, St. Peters, Mo.

ability to purchase online 24/7.

"They're able to get on at 2 a.m. when they can't sleep and see something they want and buy it," he said.

Often the price for online purchases is lower as well, but the level of service doesn't compare to what storefronts can provide.

"There's nobody online that early in the morning to tell you this may not be a fit, or this is the experience we've had with this particular firearm or it may not be the best firearm for what you're buying it for," Bastean said.

One way Ultimate Defense has leveled the playing field with online retailers was to increase the transfer fee for firearms their customers purchase online.

"An increased transfer fee gets the cost of the firearm much closer to what we have it for in the store," Bastean stated. "It's not uncommon for us to spend half an hour with a customer explaining the features and benefits of a particular firearm, and then have them thank us, take one step back from the counter and look up it up online to see if they can buy it cheaper."

Bastean also points out to customers if they purchase the item in the store, they can have it sooner than if they order it online. The "buy it now" mentality of many customers can drive some of those sales.

One other thing Bastean uses to encourage customers to buy in the store is a series of pictures of what he calls "FedEx fatalities."

"These are pictures of guns that were destroyed in transit," he said. "Even if you're saving a few dollars, you're taking a risk. That package may end up getting lost or damaged and you may have an extended delivery time. Those are the kinds of things we try to present to people so they know they have a better option than buying online."

## **BATTLING 4473 ERRORS**

The big challenge of the past year for one retailer — who asked not to be identified — was an ATF inspection that went sideways in two different ways. This particular retailer had been using paper 4473s. During the inspection itself, the Industry Operations Investigators (IOIs) entirely missed two file boxes of forms and charged the retailer with having sold almost 1,000 firearms without background checks. As a result, after a harrowing hearing, the retailer had to go through their A&D book line by line and match a 4473 to every firearm ever sold in the store and provide the information to ATF.

The same retailer also had a problem with traces. A store employee turned several firearms in during a "gun buyback" so they ended up in police hands. In a different event, a customer was admitted to a local hospital under the Baker Act, and his firearms also went to the police. All of those firearms had come from this retailer's store, and they all traced back.

During the very busy time of COVID, the retailer missed a letter from ATF asking for additional information about those traces. This omission, combined with the error during the inspection, came within a whisker of costing the retailer their FFL.

"In order to keep my FFL, I'm now required to use an electronic bound book, which doesn't integrate with my point-of-sale system," the retailer said. "I'm still trying to work it out, but this is what I have to do if I want to stay in business."

This is just a small sample size of the myriad of challenges facing independent storefront dealers today. Creativity, business nous and a healthy dose of grit are some of the unwritten requirements of the job. **SI**



Being a member of NBS has helped Anthony Puglia overcome some of the inventory hurdles he's faced over the past two years.



# 7 SOCIAL TRENDS FOR 2023 YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT

By Michelle Scheuermann

## (And One Bonus Trend That Could Set You Free From Social Media)

**T**he marketing and advertising universe (a better term is “metaverse”) moves fast, and no marketer sees this more than those who live in social media. What worked in January 2022 may not work in January 2023. And those “old” stories we tell ourselves to use *X* number of hashtags per post, or just create Reels all day also aren’t working any longer.

So, what is working? The following are the social media trends either here to stay or are just emerging for 2023.

Here are seven trends to be on the lookout for in 2023.

### 1. THE METAVERSE IS HERE, BUT WILL WE GRAVITATE TO IT?

In October 2021, Mark Zuckerberg changed his company name from Facebook to Meta, announcing the company is now “Meta-first.” And a year later, in a Meta Connect summit, Zuckerberg shared there are more people in the VR (virtual reality) world than ever before — more creators creating worlds, developers developing apps and brands launching virtual goods (NFTs, anyone?). The future isn’t far away.

As Zuckerberg noted in this summit, “Opportunities here are going to keep growing as more devices are being made and more people are on the platform.”

Sure, but what about our world? What about



Image: Kittiphan / Adobe Stock

those of us who head to the range during the week and go to the field on the weekend? Do we want to live in a virtual world? Probably not. However, Meta sees VR as a social platform. There are VR chats and games that allow for multiple player options — you can even record a podcast in VR!

What does this mean for brands in the firearm space? Not much, unless spending thousands of dollars on developing a VR game is in the marketing budget. But perhaps there are ways to dabble — by creating VR chat rooms for first-time firearm buyers or developing a podcast on VR. This would show

that, yes, the firearm industry understands the metaverse and wants to play.

### 2. META IS ON THE STRUGGLE BUS WITH TIKTOK

Instagram continues to release anywhere between 10–12 updates *per month*. Some are big; some are random — like a recent release allowing a song to play on your profile. Why are they updating their platform so much? Well, they’re struggling with competition from TikTok.

Say what you will about TikTok: It continues to dominate the social media space with the amount of traffic to its app. Even



its advertising campaign of #IlearneditonTikTok is telling people to not Google their questions — or even visit YouTube (which was previously the Google research platform of choice) but instead, head to TikTok. Articles popped up late 2021 announcing how TikTok's traffic surpassed that of Facebook and *all* of Google's suite of products, including Gmail! However, Instagram has been downloaded more times than TikTok (3.8 billion vs. 2.6 billion), which means, by default, there are more users on Instagram.

Even with all the geopolitical drama surrounding TikTok, according to a recent article by DigiDay,<sup>1</sup> the platform is still a brand marketer's dream.

Author Krystal Scanlon states, "And the ad dollars continue to shift to TikTok from other channels, from Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, even TV. This is happening despite recent warnings in the U.S. from political leaders whose national security concerns could spark regulatory action against TikTok, which is owned by China-based ByteDance."

Most of our readers are unable to even exist on TikTok (even if it was desired) due to the nature of the firearms business. But the firearm audience is there, regardless. Meta knows all audiences are there, but even after tossing millions in developing new features on Instagram, it is still on the struggle bus, according to an article from SocialMediaToday.

It shares, "According to a new report from *The Wall Street Journal*, Instagram engagement is declining, with Reels in particular, seeing a significant drop-

off in user engagement of late. As reported by *WSJ*, TikTok users are spending over 10 times as many hours consuming content in that app as Instagram users currently spend viewing Reels. According to a leaked internal report, Reels engagement is also in decline, dropping 13.6% in recent months — while 'most Reels users have no engagement whatsoever.'"<sup>2</sup>

So ... in case you were wondering why your Reels views and engagement have dropped over the past six months, there it is in a nutshell.



## Don't listen to the experts. Post when your team (or you) has the time, energy and frankly has something of value to say!

Does this mean brands need to jump on TikTok? No. Should you at least secure your handle so no one else takes it? Yes.

### 3. THE MASSIVE AMOUNT OF CONTENT CREATED DAILY

Chalene Johnson of InstaClub Hub recently shared to grow on Instagram or TikTok specifically accounts need to post three to five times per day.<sup>3</sup> (She goes on to say this may not

be the best strategy for all accounts as mental health is also a big — and worthwhile — discussion today.)

This is our current world, as much as brands may dislike it. Brands previously thought followers would "get tired" of their content delivered that often. But the kicker is — users follow so many accounts they just endlessly scroll through their feed, and do they really know if one gun post from the range is different from other's gun post from the range? They just want the gun post. Full stop.

Being unique and breaking through the clutter has always been a marketer's challenge — it doesn't matter if it's a TV commercial, print ad or devising a content strategy for social media.

Yes, but how?

**1. Post as often as what fits in the schedule.** Don't listen to the experts. Post when your team (or you) has the time, energy and frankly *has something of value to say!* Use a third-party scheduler, but Facebook's Creator Studio can serve all needs for Instagram and Facebook scheduling. LinkedIn is even testing a scheduling tool. Batch create and schedule posts out for a month at a time.

**2. Make content about the end user.** Use hooks when creating content, such as "The number-one reason you aren't hitting the target," or "I bet you didn't realize our business offers ..." or "If you have [this problem] then [here's the solution]."

### 4. AUTHENTICITY (STILL) REIGNS

Meta doesn't want your leftovers. In other words, they want one-of-a-kind, authentic content created specifically for their

platforms. Again, blame TikTok. Due to its wide popularity of video content, folks were re-utilizing their TikTok videos to Instagram and Facebook.

And since they are competitors, Meta wants none of it and began to "downgrade" those videos with the TikTok logo on them. Facebook has long downgraded video links to YouTube. (Google and Meta are competitors, as well.) And in fact, Facebook, in general, doesn't want people leaving its site.

Authenticity also means less production, less acting and more "being present." There's no secret formula to being authentic — just be you. Camera-phone pictures perform just as well as DSLR — and videos shot vertically with you talking into the camera *within the app* perform the best.

The problem for many brands is: Who is our spokesperson? Who is "the face" of the brand? Who do we put on camera? Is it the influencers? Is it the CEO? Is it the social media person?

Brands must decide their "persona" on social media and stick with it. Whether it's the usually stuffy CEO being witty in video, or a handful of influencers who continually create content for the brand, the result is the same — just post authentic content specific to that platform.

### 5. INCREASED SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY

Adam Mosseri, Instagram's CEO, continues sharing safety announcements for Instagram, which is beneficial for brands in the firearm space.

**1. Improved Nudges.** If someone writes something that could be interpreted





as offensive or heated, the nudge will ask them if they're sure they want to send it. This may assist in those "back-and-forth" arguments in the comments.

## 2. More Blocking.

Currently brands had the option to block an account and any *new* accounts they create. Now everyone can block any *existing* accounts they have, too.

## 3. Expanding "Hidden Words."

Hidden words are expanding to more areas to keep your messages and space safe from certain words. They're expanding this list to include typical words seen in spam and scams.

For brands, the biggest safety feature everyone continues to battle is hacking. Hackers are becoming increasingly sophisticated, with the latest scam landing in DMs asking if "you can do me a favor," and then asking to turn off two-factor authentication. Never, ever turn off two-factor authentication, no matter the reason given. Social media managers must stay diligent to keep them — and the brands they represent — safe, and that will only become more of an issue in 2023.

All parties who have access to your brand's social pages better have two-factor authentication on for their personal pages. Assume at any point in time someone is attempting to hack your pages. Question everything. Also, brands don't have to engage on every comment, every time. It's acceptable to delete comments. It's acceptable to block users. And, dare it be said, it's also

acceptable for the social media manager to make these sorts of decisions on their own.

## 6. VIDEO HAS MOVED INTO THE MOTHER-IN-LAW SUITE, AND LIVES WITH YOU

The "TikTok Brain" article in the *WSJ* mentioned in No. 2 focused on kids demonstrating how they're unable to sit through a feature-length film. However, you could argue adults are feeling "TikTok Brain" just as much. Are our attention spans shorter? Is the brain being rewarded with short bursts of funny cat videos? This is so powerful, YouTube launched "Shorts" in 2020, which are short videos shot in vertical format. (Sounds a lot like TikTok, right?)

Making long-form content still has its place. Instagram recently extended the length of Reels to 90 seconds and increased video length in Stories from 15 seconds to 60 seconds.

What hasn't changed, however, is how entertaining, engaging and educational these videos must be to perform well — and it's only going to become more important in 2023. Time spent on a post is a key factor in any social media site's algorithm. YouTube rewards its creators financially the longer people spend watching their content and Instagram rewards those pages who people save, like, comment or pause on a post (all are considered forms of engagement).

Takeaway: while Mosseri has since backed down on the idea of "all video, all the time" on Instagram, video

still performs well across all platforms. For Instagram and Facebook, go back to sprinkling in static images and carousel posts. For Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, continue sharing blog posts and other, long-form content and for YouTube, record video in vertical specifically for "Shorts."



**Authenticity also means less production, less acting and more "being present." There's no secret formula to being authentic — just be you.**

## 7. SOCIAL MEDIA OVERLAP WITH SEO

There's a strong overlap of how a brand's social media pages impact SEO rankings. Those social media pages can help build ranking for your website by providing backlinks and building trust with Google. How? Say a brand shares blog content about "how to buy your first firearm" to their Twitter feed and a few influential gun influencers

retweet it. And a blogger writing an article about first-time gun owners finds those retweets and uses that article as a reference for their blog, thereby creating a backlink to the brand's original blog. This backlink helps create better ranking on Google. Don't get this confused by the fact a Tweet helped the brand's website rank better. The Tweet is "correlation," whereas the blogger who saw the Tweet and used it in their article is "causation."

Hashtags are still a useful keyword tool, but Mosseri has reported hashtags aren't necessarily helping posts show up in searches. He claims they were never meant to assist with boosting engagement on a post, but more to help categorize that post for people to find it easier in search. While it's important to use hashtags, keep it to three or four keywords.

Other SEO practices important for all social media feeds:

- Use keywords in the company bio and change the Instagram Name (not the username) to keyword-specific terms for your brand or business (e.g., The Best Long-Gun Range in Dallas).
- Use commonly searched words in captions.
- Use text in videos (take advantage of auto-captioning for Reels and Stories).
- Take advantage of alt-text on posts by stacking with keywords. (Alt-text is for sight-impaired users; it helps to describe the post. For example, a lady in blue shooting a GLOCK 19 with XYZ ammo and upgraded fiber optic sights at the XYZ

gun range.)

While it's difficult to keep up with all the changes, pay attention to the little things — such as researching keywords for your business, maximizing your social media bio and get with the company's web team to have a better discussion on how each can assist in optimizing SEO.

## 8. (BONUS!) STEP AWAY FROM SOCIAL MEDIA. PERIOD.

Didn't see this one coming? Mari Smith, a long-time Facebook advocate and guru, recently posted about the "seas of change" she's seeing on Facebook. She wrote in a post:

*"I keep seeing people who used to publish content much more regularly — on their personal profiles and*

*business pages — have cut back or even ground to a halt. It's overall frustration with social media. It's constantly jumping through hoops to comply with the latest algorithmic challenges for little reward. It's being utterly fed up with bugs, glitches, issues, lockouts, shut downs and more, with zero support. It's allowing ourselves to be conditioned (and manipulated) by the big-tech companies, believing the only way to succeed on their platforms is to crank out even more content and try all kinds of tricks and hacks to get our stuff seen, to get more reach, to grow our following, etc. etc."*<sup>14</sup>

Mari — welcome to our world. Those of us in the outdoor industry have felt this for a long, long, long

time. She continued in this lengthy post to share social media agencies are losing clients as companies no longer see results, and they want to step off the hamster wheel.

Stepping away from social media is no longer shocking. But hopefully it means brands are stepping into other ways of communicating with their customers, such as email marketing, text messaging, VIP groups, in-store functions and more. Is this a trend? Are brands done with social media? It's difficult to say, but there's a systemic shift happening in social media. Perhaps it was just time for it to occur.

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Trends are funny in that

we're looking ahead six to 12 months, trying to decide how the marketing mix (and budget) should look for 2023. But then Meta laughs in our faces and changes everything with one little update.

Therefore, if there's anything to take away for 2023, it is to be flexible, ask questions, be alert, don't live in a social media silo and, no, social media isn't just punishing you, it's punishing everyone. Good luck! **SI**

### Footnotes:

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BY DOUG VANDERWOUDE

# WIN THE CUSTOMER SERVICE RACE

## GET READY TO LAP THE COMPETITION

**T**he first rule of customer service in today's world? Hire nice people

and, if possible, make sure they're not all stale, pale and male. You can teach people the gun industry, but you can't always teach bullet heads to be nice.

Every store needs a bullet head, just not many of them. Mine was a man named Robert; he was a walking

encyclopedia on firearms. Robert could tell you Gaston Glock's birthday and the stipple count on the version one model and more.

Unfortunately, he would tell the customer all of this — and more. Even after the customer said they wanted to buy, Robert would continue to throw out information. While he may not have been the smoothest or best salesperson, Robert was an extremely valuable part of the staff, as certain customers wanted the in-depth knowledge he possessed, and the rest of our team members would go to

him for answers to help solve their customers' problems.

### **BUILD A WINNING TEAM**

Looking at your current staff, how well do you train them to be good at customer service and why does it matter so much?

Think of your store as Kyle Larson's NASCAR racing team. Larson's team won the 2021 NASCAR Cup Series Championship. What does this have to do with your store? In order to win the championship, they built the highest horsepower motor, had the smoothest body to go through the wind the fastest and hired the best driver. All of this work would be for naught if they put whitewall tires on the race car. Whitewall tires won't grip the track as well as racing tires: The speed difference would be so great Larson would get passed like an outhouse on the side of the track.

Similarly with your store, you can have a beautiful building fully stocked with the hottest guns and competitive pricing — yet just like those whitewall tires on a winning race car, your sales staff can ruin everything by how they treat your guests.

### **PROVIDING GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE ANYTIME**

Retail isn't fair; the deck is stacked against traditional brick-and-mortar retailers who try to provide good customer service — battling basement piranhas and internet sellers with low overhead to big-box retailers. It's not easy.

After I sold my store/range, I worked for a weekend representing Weatherby and Leupold at a Cabela's store. The difference in customer expectations was startling. At my store, if a customer waited five minutes for a salesperson they'd be upset, plus the salesperson better have answers about the product they wanted.



## **IT'S HARD TO EXPECT OUR SALES TEAM TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO OUR GUESTS IF WE DON'T PROVIDE INFORMATION TO OUR SALES STAFF FIRST.**

At Cabela's, customers came in with the catalog opened to the page and said, "I want this." No asking for advice, haggling over price or wanting an extra magazine for free — just *"I only want one of these."* If it was a firearm they wanted to buy, I would inform them I wasn't authorized to complete the paperwork and it would be 45 minutes before a qualified employee could ring it up. Instead of storming out, the customer would smile and say, "Okay, I'll just look around until then." Not fair.

As retailers, we're supposed to have great customer service at a moment's notice and be the cheapest — yet consumers don't hold big-box stores to the same standard.

### **KNOWLEDGE IS POWER**

How can we fight back? First, we have to ask our management teams and ourselves some tough questions. What tools are we providing to our

sales teams? Have we provided instruction about the products we sell? It's hard to expect our sales team to provide information to our guests if we don't provide information to our sales staff first.

One way to accomplish this is a short staff meeting every day (and be sure to film them for staff who aren't working during this time). During the meeting, take one product and you or someone on staff explain why a customer would benefit from owning it. For example, if you stock standard 1911 magazines as well as high-performance versions like the ones manufactured by Wilson Combat, explain to your sales staff what makes the high-performance version different and how those differences would better serve customers. A staff meeting every morning will cover a lot of products in a year and lead to increased sales.

If you have a range, the high-performance magazines and accessories should be in/on your rental guns. Doing so can result in add-on sales. When a customer takes advantage of your try-before-you-buy program and decides they want one just like they rented, you have a great opportunity to sell the high-end magazine and accessories with the gun.

### **WHAT'S YOUR VIBE?**

Did you motivate your staff today by providing a boost of energy and excitement? I was onsite at The Armories (three locations in Florida) when GM Matt Brett was giving his morning staff meeting, interacting with the staff, letting them know how things have been going and what they were going to be doing to make it even better. He also covered the goals for the day/week and accomplishments so far. His enthusiasm was so infectious, I almost wanted to clock in and go to work for him.



Speaking of The Armories, does your store have a good vibe? Many times you can enter a store and just get a feeling after walking around for five minutes. Is the staff happy to be there? Is there some buzz? Go into any of The Armories locations and you feel happy: They have the buzz customers want to be around, starting with greeting every guest who comes through the door. Does your store?

Hank Yacek, the CEO of Point of Impact who offers a course in retail sales training specific to firearms retailing, says, "With employees, the more you use the reins, the less they use their brains." Giving your top staff more power to make decisions without having to go to you for approval can really free up your time (and who couldn't use more time?). Working with store owners and managers for years, I quickly learned the best ones are working on their business, not in it. It's hard to be thinking about what categories to add to your product mix when you're busy micromanaging every decision.

#### **ACTUALLY PUT TEAM MEMBERS IN CUSTOMERS' SHOES**

Another tip I picked up from taking Hank's course involved making new shooters feel comfortable in your store. Have you ever thought about how a new shooter feels walking into a gun store for the first time? What can you do to make new shooters feel welcome?

To gain an advantage in this growing market, the first step to making them comfortable is actually very inexpensive, and it will change your staff's mindset to understand where this first-time buyer is coming from. Hank's tip is sending your male employees to a Victoria's Secret-type store alone with \$20 to purchase three items and then later having them return it all. How did it make them feel? If they're honest about it, they were probably a little nervous or uncomfortable.

Now they'll know, firsthand,



**SIMILARLY WITH YOUR STORE, YOU CAN HAVE A BEAUTIFUL BUILDING FULLY STOCKED WITH THE HOTTEST GUNS AND COMPETITIVE PRICING — YET JUST LIKE THOSE WHITEWALL TIRES ON A WINNING RACE CAR, YOUR SALES STAFF CAN RUIN EVERYTHING BY HOW THEY TREAT YOUR GUESTS.**

how many new gun purchasers feel walking into your store. Hopefully your sales team will now treat those new to our industry with some good hospitality and a little more patience.

#### **WHO EARNS THEIR PAYCHECK?**

In order to know where to spend the most of your limited sales training time and which

team members you should be rewarding, you need to identify those salespeople who are earning their paycheck (i.e., actually selling versus being order-takers).

Are you tracking how many unique UPCs or total number of items there are per ticket? This is one of the best ways to determine how well your sales staff is selling versus order-taking. If a customer leaves with a firearm and a box of ammo, your sales staff just took an order — they didn't actually sell anything.

When I owned my store, the software I used wasn't sophisticated enough to give me a nice report to rank sales staff like some of the systems today. However, I could tell just by diving into my daily item sold report one of our staff members, Matt Borener (now a sales rep with H&G Outdoors) was working that day based on the number of speed loaders, grip extensions and holsters sold. He came from an office supply super store and had retail sales training and little gun knowledge before coming to my store. What Matt lacked in firearm knowledge he more than made up for by being approachable and oh-so-smooth with customers.

Think he was worth more to my bottom line than any other salesperson? I don't know if all the credit goes to his previous sales training, but I worked hard to train other staff members to sell like Matt. If I had a whole team with his abilities, I could be on the beach by now.

Consider: How much time and money are you spending on sales staff training? Think of sales training as changing those whitewall tires on the race car analogy into super-fast racing tires and lapping your competition.

Some will question, "What if they leave after I spent the time and money training them?" My reply: "What if you don't train them, and they stay?" **SI**



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# NIGHT SIGHTS

**Digital Optics Help Hunters Put The Squeeze On Hogs And Coyotes — While Boosting Sales**

BY BRYAN HENDRICKS

**AS** more hunters become more proficient at hog and predator hunting, they demand optics that complement their tactics. Thermal and infrared optics are the solution. They can be the most expensive items per unit in a retailer's inventory, but avid hog and coyote hunters will pay for gear that improves their success and enhances their enjoyment.

As their technology evolves and demand increases, high-quality

digital optics are more affordable and more accessible than ever, contends Kevin Reese, senior media relations specialist for Sellmark, which markets the popular Pulsar and Sightmark brands of digital optics.

According to Reese, this represents a potentially lucrative addition to a retailer's optics department, which can attract new customers and satisfy the needs of existing customers.

"Technology has come a long way," Reese said.

"Just 10–15 years ago, thermal imaging was probably going to run you \$15,000 to \$20,000, and sometimes \$30,000. In my Marine Corps days, thermal existed, but I never saw it. It was more of a mythical creature. Now it's widely available. And it's affordable. There's a number of other brands we compete with on thermal builds. It's an exciting space. It's a good time to be in it."

#### **THERE'S A DIFFERENCE**

Feral pigs and coyotes are most active at night,

but passive day scopes are useless in the dark. Thermal and infrared optics employ electronic imaging to display a target. Infrared scopes route reflected photons through electrodes, and a digital processor reproduces the image on a screen.

A thermal optic emits an infrared ray that returns data to the unit's internal sensor. The processor interprets this information to create a thermogram, which appears on the device's screen.

Image: Pulsar Thermion 2 XP50

Although they're categorized as digital optics, infrared and thermal imaging are not the same thing, and they are not interchangeable, Reese said. For starters, "night vision" refers to infrared because it enables a user to see a target's actual image. A thermal optic displays a target's heat signature.

Educating a customer about the differences is initially a hurdle for a sales associate, but it also serves as a trust-building exercise, said Josh Hunter, the digital optics specialist at Fort Thompson Sporting Goods in Sherwood,

Ark.

"One of the biggest misconceptions is everyone thinks of these as scopes," Hunter noted. "You have to stop thinking of it as a scope and think of it as a digital camera that happens to have a reticle in it."

Another important difference is night vision, or infrared, generally shows more detail, allowing a user to positively identify a target. Thermal units generally only reveal something generating heat, but many units don't have sufficient resolution to show enough detail to identify the source. At a distance, you might not be able to distinguish between a skunk and a house cat, or more important, a feral pig and a cow.

To get better resolution, you have to pay more. Pulsar's Thermion LRF XP50 Pro, a high-end unit, provides clear resolution for about \$6,600, before state and local sales tax.


"A lot of times, people will mislabel thermal imaging as night vision," Reese said. "They're not the same things. Thermal will run 24 hours a day. It doesn't care what time of day it is as long as there are heat signatures out there."

He continued, "Digital night vision, or generational night vision, is specifically designed to run at nighttime and take light particles and pull those light particles in, to explode them into infinitely more light particles, which are then represented on your screen."

Because an infrared optic amplifies ambient infrared light, it doesn't work in darkness. It needs additional light to illuminate a target's infrared profile.

Most infrared units have integral illuminators, but they don't project sufficient light to illuminate an image at long range. This requires an additional illuminator, usually a large green light.

"If you're looking at it here under all these fluorescent lights, they're pumping out a ton of IR, so these optics look amazing!" Hunter said. "But when you get out in the woods, all of a sudden there are no fluorescent lights pumping out a bunch of IR, and you don't have any image source."



**Fact! You definitely get what you pay for! Generally speaking, you're going to spend about \$3,000 for a thermal unit to get the level of image quality that's going to make you feel comfortable about pulling a trigger."**

**Josh Hunter,**  
*Digital Optics Specialist*  
Fort Thompson Sporting Goods  
Sherwood, Ark.

This brings the customer back to buy an additional illuminator, and he might not be happy about it.

"I tell people this in the store," Hunter said. "I would

say 70% of the time they listen to me. About 30% of the time they're back looking for a high-end illuminator because their unit just does not have the juice to get them as much distance as they expected."

#### **A PLUG-AND-PLAY OPTION**

A thermal optic, on the other hand, works without an additional light source. It's truly a plug-and-play device.

Their myriad features make digital optics a gear geek's dream. They have video capability, so you can video your shots in real time. You can also route the image to a smartphone or stream it.

Sighting in a digital optic is a one-shot process. No longer do you need to "shoot the square" to ensure your turrets move your reticles properly. Instead of turning turrets on a day scope to adjust your reticle to proper windage and elevation, you zero a digital optic through an electronic menu. Aim at the bull's-eye and shoot. With the reticle still on the bull's-eye, push buttons to move the reticle digitally to the actual point of impact.

As with all optics, digital optics have introductory, intermediate and advanced tiers, said Steve Lemonov, director of marketing for ATN Corp. Anchoring ATN's infrared and thermal lineup, respectively, are the X-Sight 4K Pro and the ThOR 4. Tiered price points offer comfortable entry points for all buyers.

The entry-level units are quality products and enable customers to familiarize themselves with the technology. Field experience shows them where they might want to upgrade to



improve their performance. "It's an affordable opportunity for people testing the waters to use the products and maybe upgrade in six months to a year," Lemonov added.

#### YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

To avoid misconceptions, a retailer should make it clear to a customer a digital optic is one product where price reflects a dramatic difference in image quality.

The average hunter can't tell the difference between a traditional \$200 scope and a \$2,000 traditional model. With digital, and especially with thermal, the difference is obvious.

For this reason, Josh Hunter believes, buyers should purchase the best they can afford at the outset.

"Fact: You definitely get what you pay for!" he stated. "Generally speaking, you're going to spend about \$3,000 for a thermal unit to get the level of image quality that's going to make you feel comfortable about pulling a trigger."

Fortunately, the price of high-quality digital optics is increasingly affordable. Levi Miller, a sales representative for Sellmark, said Pulsar's XQ-38 Talion bridges the gap between entry-level and intermediate-level quality for about \$2,500.

"It's the best entry-level thermal we've ever come out with," Miller said. "It comes with everything Pulsar offers: picture mode, eight color palettes, onboard Wi-Fi and a single battery provides about nine hours



One advantage thermal optics have over others is they can be used in light or dark environments.

of operation. It's super lightweight and a little bit more compact than what people are used to seeing with Pulsar."

The Talion XP38 also has

a 1,500-yard detection range. Comparatively, an ordinary digital night vision scope has a detection range of 300–400 yards. Higher-end models go to 500–600 yards.

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## 1,001 USES

An upside to digital optic technology is, unlike computers and smartphones, the digital optic you buy today will still be current a year from now. Pulsar and ATN, for example, allow you to download firmware updates to keep your products relevant.

“As older items get phased out, those technologies from the older item are brought into a new item — and it’s at a significantly lower price point than the previous unit,” Hunter shared. “They pull the best parts from a phased-out item and throw it into a new thing, but the new thing is \$1,000 less than the old thing. It never stops being relevant. It just kind of gets — I don’t want to use the word ‘recycled’ — but to some extent this is kind of what’s happening. You upgrade into



Josh Hunter talks a customer through the selling points of a SightMark thermal device to a customer at Fort Thompson Sporting Goods in Sherwood, Ark. He likens thermal optics to a “digital camera that happens to have a reticle in it.”

something better, but its also significantly less expensive.”

The uses for thermal optics are vast. They’re very helpful in finding dead game, especially in the dark, but their application extends far beyond hunting.

Firefighters use them to

search for hidden hotspots in side burning or smoldering structures, and also for victims. Boaters use them at night to detect boats running without lights. Law enforcement personnel use them to find fugitives.

“My wife used it to detect

some insulation issues around our windows and doors, so she gave me a little honey-do list,” Reese said. “It has so many different applications outside of hunting.” **SI**

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BY JADE MOLDAE

# HAVA: MAKING A BIG IMPACT IN VETERANS' LIVES

**S**ince its founding by shooting sports industry executives in 2007, Honored American Veterans Afield (HAVA) has been laser-focused in its mission to serve disabled veterans and injured active-duty military through participation in outdoor events. Fifteen years later, HAVA's mission is unchanged — but it has adapted to changing times, giving the organization even more creative avenues to serve our nation's heroes.

## RESUMING FULL OPERATIONS

In 2022, HAVA resumed its pre-pandemic agenda, full of HAVA Family Days, small-to-medium-sized range training events and multiple hunts throughout the country. It also added some first-time events offering unique experiences for participants.

"While we're ramping back up to full capacity with things like HAVA Family Days and HAVA range training events, we've also broadened our reach in the past year," shared Tom Taylor, HAVA chairman. "We've added ATV and river adventure trips, as well as being involved in a corporate training event

through a partnership with the Light Foundation."

Taylor shared HAVA is planning another first: A long-distance motorcycle ride later this year.

"It will feature six veterans and six HAVA trainers starting in North Carolina, with a tour of military base locations in the Southeast, and ending in Sturgis, S.D. The ride will have firearms training as part of the experience," he explained.

In a shift from HAVA range training events and hunts, these diverse events integrate firearms into the experience.

"All HAVA events still feature guns," Taylor confirmed. "But what we're finding is guns, combined with other adventures, is very therapeutic."

With its range training events, hunts and Family Days, HAVA isn't straying from its roots.

"We're maintaining a focus on our core mission: Getting disabled veterans to the range or out in the field hunting," Taylor said.

## THE "WHY" BEHIND THE MISSION

In September, HAVA hosted a range event in the Pacific Northwest at the

◀ HAVA gives veterans the chance of a lifetime with expansive, memorable hunts. This past November, a team endured five days in subzero temperatures in Wyoming to fulfill their cow elk tags.

Tacoma Sportsmen's Club in Puyallup, Wash. The three-day event featured nearly 75 veterans who had the opportunity to try trap shooting, long-range rifle and tactical shotgun shooting — along with primitive archery and slingshot instruction. The event was a success and plans are underway to stage it again this year.

One participant's experience personifies the "why" behind the HAVA mission. When asked to share about the impact of this event, the attendee said: "I didn't know how much I needed this experience. The HAVA staff enabled me to reconnect and do what I truly enjoy, shooting awesome firearms and connecting with my fellow veterans. I can't wait until next year!"

**"WE'RE MAINTAINING A FOCUS ON OUR CORE MISSION: GETTING DISABLED VETERANS TO THE RANGE OR OUT IN THE FIELD HUNTING."**

Tom Taylor, HAVA Chairman

Another "why" moment came after HAVA's flagship event, HAVA National Family Day, held at the San Antonio Police Training Academy for the 13th time. The November event welcomed 110 participants who enjoyed a day on the range that featured Cowboy Action Shooting, archery, axe throwing and an onsite shooting demonstration from eight-time world champion Lena Miculek.

At the conclusion of the event, one of the attendees stated: "I suffer from severe PTSD, and can't drive a car so I had to ride my bike to the event. When I checked in, I was depressed, anxious and unhappy. Attending the HAVA event was better therapy for me than anything I've tried. This event puts a big smile on



my face, and that's very rare for me."

These comments represent a very small sample size of the dozens HAVA's team hears each year from attendees and their families.

#### ANSWERING THE CALL

Looking ahead to HAVA's 16th year of operation, Taylor shared the current market conditions have created a challenge for HAVA and its team of volunteers. While support from the firearms industry remains strong — nearly all of HAVA's original sustaining sponsors are still involved with the organization, plus more — it has waned from pre-pandemic levels.

To limit the impact of reduced financial support,

HAVA has forged creative partnerships. These have enabled HAVA to maintain a robust schedule of range training events and hunts throughout the year.


"As we get further from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, large donations from companies have declined," Taylor informed.

**"ATTENDING THE  
HAVA EVENT  
WAS BETTER  
THERAPY FOR ME  
THAN ANYTHING  
I'VE TRIED."**

HAVA Family Day Attendee

"But there are unique models in place that provide significant financial support, such as the NSSF/HAVA Golf Classic [held during SHOT Show week], SIG SAUER Charity Golf Tournament and the Light Foundation's Corporate Training Day, where HAVA is a significant benefactor."

These events, coupled with sustaining sponsor support, wholly fund HAVA's operating budget.

"It's challenging, but we've been able to maintain our operations and continue to serve disabled veterans," Taylor said. "We always welcome new companies to step up and support those veterans who have been impacted, both mentally and physically, in their service to our country." 

HAVA is a 501(C)(3) organization formed by companies in the shooting and outdoor industry with the purpose of raising awareness and further assisting disabled veterans with their healing process through guided hunts, shooting events and other outdoor sports activities. The sustaining sponsor companies are Smith & Wesson, NSSF, SIG SAUER, Academi, Arnold Defense, Crimson Trace, FMG Publications, GLOCK, Hornady, Leapers/UTG, Leupold & Stevens, O.F. Mossberg & Sons, RSR Group, Ruger, Surefire, Taurus, Vista Outdoor/Federal, XS Sights, Yamaha Outdoors and other contributing companies.

To learn more about HAVA, visit [honoredveterans.org](https://honoredveterans.org).



**Top Left:** The 2022 SIG SAUER Charity Golf Tournament raised over \$125,000 for HAVA. The annual event started in 2016, which raised \$7,000 — it has increased each year since.

**Top Right:** While firearms training continues to be a central component to HAVA events, there has been success introducing veterans to other pursuits, such as primitive archery.

**Bottom Right:** A HAVA trainer assists on the firing line during a HAVA range event. One-on-one instruction is another hallmark of HAVA's unique offerings.





**2023** *NEW*

# PRODUCT SHOWCASE

By Jenna Buckley & Jade Moldae

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## PRODUCTS READY TO ROLL IN THE NEW YEAR

With the holiday buying season coming to a close, customers will want to know “what’s new?” for 2023. Part Two of *Shooting Industry’s* three-part New Product Showcase provides a useful reference point for your store to answer this question and get ahead of the competition by stocking it first.

Products from more than 60 brands are featured here — ranging from a variety of line extensions to companies making a splash in entirely new product categories. See something that stands out to carry in-store? Contact the company directly or search them out at early-year industry trade events.

Want to see even more new-for-2023 new products? Stay tuned for the February issue.

Here’s to getting off to a strong start in 2023.



### FN AMERICA

(703) 288-3500  
[fnamerica.com](https://fnamerica.com)

FN America’s **FN RUSH 9TI** 9mm pistol suppressor is made from a lightweight titanium-hybrid construction and was developed for the FN 509 tactical line of pistols and other 1/2x28"-threaded firearms. The unique booster assembly, blast baffle and baffle-stack design provide a tight gas piston seal and even gas distribution that flows the gases forward to deliver reduced blowback to the user’s face, reduces recoil and provides effective sound suppression. The suppressor is 7.3" long with a 1.375" tube diameter. It weighs 10.8 oz. (excluding piston) and includes an end cap/front cap assembly tool. It’s available in Flat Dark Earth or Black HT Cerakote.

### PYRAMEX

(800) 736-8673  
[pyramexsafety.com](https://pyramexsafety.com)

Pyramex’s **VENTURE GEAR VG COMBO KIT** includes both ANSI-rated safety eyewear and ANSI-rated hearing protection. The clear-lens safety glasses meet ANSI Z87.1+ safety standards and incorporate a wrap-around design. The lightweight lenses are constructed from scratch-resistant polycarbonate and soft non-slip rubber temple tips ensure an all-day comfortable wear. Pyramex’s quality safety earmuffs meet ANSI S3.19 safety standards plus a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) of 24dB. The earmuffs feature a low-profile design with height adjustment capabilities for a customized fit. They are also ergonomically arched so fitting over the head or over a hat is extremely comfortable for the wearer. All VG Combo Kits come with clear lens safety glasses with a choice from a wide variety of earmuff colors including gray, pink, OD green and powder blue.





**EXCLUSIVE GIRSAN  
MC P35 SELECT 1**



**EXCLUSIVE RUGER MARK IV 22/45  
LITE WITH RITON 3TACTIX MPRD2**

## DAVIDSON'S INC.

**(800) 367-4867**  
davidsonsinc.com

Davidson's **EXCLUSIVE HK VP9** has a gray polymer frame, contrasting nicely with the HK black hostile environment-finished machined steel slide with front and rear serrations. Its push-button magazine release is reversible, while the slide lock is completely ambidextrous as are HK's patented charging supports. HK's famous cold hammer-forged barrel ensures long service life. The polygonal bore profile, with no traditional lands-and-grooves rifling, contributes to longer service life as well as a slight increase in muzzle velocity. The Exclusive 9mm VP9 includes three interchangeable backstraps in a matching gray polymer, green luminous front dot sight, serrated blacked-out rear sight, Picatinny rail, two 17-round magazines and mag loader. OAL is 7.34" and it weighs 29.84 oz.

The **EXCLUSIVE RUGER MARK IV 22/45 LITE WITH RITON 3TACTIX MPRD2** boasts a 4.4", 1/2-28 threaded barrel, ambidextrous manual safety and a red or purple anodized aluminum upper with custom ventilation cuts. The 3Tactix MPRD 2 is an extremely compact and versatile pistol red dot with shake awake, auto brightness and auto off features. It comes with a 3 MOA dot to ensure ultimate precision and rapid target acquisition. Davidson's worked with Ruger to remove the iron sights and any rails, and engineered and machined a custom mount for the 3TMPRD2.

The **EXCLUSIVE GIRSAN MC P35 SELECT 1** pays homage to the Browning Hi-Power. Built on a steel frame and slide, the 9mm MC P35 boasts a 16-round capacity in a staggered column magazine and a 4.25" barrel. The Select 1 features a gloss black finish, gold colored controls and finely checkered walnut grip panels. The gold controls include the eternal extractor, slide stop, ambidextrous thumb safety, magazine release and serrated ring hammer. The grip panel screws are likewise accented. The walnut grip panels are finely checkered just where the user needs the extra grip purchase. The MC P35 Select 1 weighs 32 oz., and the OAL is 7.75".



## ANDERSON MANUFACTURING

**(859) 689-4085**  
andersonmanufacturing.com

Anderson extends its A4 Series with three new models. The **A4 PISTOL WITH QUAD RAIL** fitted with a 10.5" Anderson front sight based barrel with a 1:7 twist operates on a carbine length gas system. It's equipped with an SB Tactical SBA3 pistol brace. The **A4 CARBINE WITH QUAD RAIL** is fitted with a 16" Anderson front sight based barrel with a 1:8 twist, operates on a carbine length gas system and is equipped with an Anderson six-position adjustable buttstock. The **A4 RIFLE WITH QUAD RAIL** is fitted with a 20" Anderson front sight based barrel with a 1:9 twist, operates on a rifle length gas system and is equipped with the fixed A2-style buttstock. The A4 Quad Rail options are chambered in 5.56 NATO and have a Magpul MBUS rear flip-up sight. The A4 Carbine and Pistol with Quad Rail are both fitted with a 6.75" American-made, aluminum drop-in quad rail handguard while the A4 Rifle with Quad Rail is equipped with the 11.5".

## CZ-USA

**(800) 955-4486**  
cz-usa.com

The **CZ 600 RANGE** is part of the new 600-series rifle family from CZ-USA. The 600 Range features a 24" heavy cold-hammer-forged barrel, threaded and suppressor-ready. Additional specs include: sub 0.7 MOA guaranteed with match factory ammo, short extractor controlled feed, silent two-position safety, adjustable trigger, 60° bolt throw, Remington 700 scope base hole pattern, magazine fed with magazine lock (selectable), laminate wood stock, tool-less height-adjustable cheek piece, monopod Picatinny rail attachment and oversized alloy bolt knob. At 10 lbs., and 44.9" long, the 600 Range is chambered in 6mm Creedmoor and .308 Win.



## TIMNEY TRIGGERS

**(866) 484-6639**  
timneytriggers.com

The Timney replacement **TWO-STAGE TRIGGER FOR HK MP5 SEMI-AUTOMATIC VARIANTS** utilizes an existing rifle's ejector lever, ejector spring and the ejector axis pin matched to a rifle's chambering. The trigger is factory-set with a 2-lb. first stage and a 2-lb. second stage, elevating the platform so the shooter can achieve accuracy. The trigger housing is made from 6061 T6 aluminum and anodized black to create a weather- and corrosion-resistant trigger. The hammer is made from S7 tool steel and then heat-treated and NP3-coated. The trigger is compatible with HK 91/93 and 94 type firearms and their clones — SEF/semi-auto trigger packs and corresponding safety selector levers.





## DSG OUTERWEAR

(608) 665-0303  
dsgouterwear.com

The **TURKEY VEST IN REALTREE EDGE** has ample room for turkey gear thanks to multiple storage pockets and compartments, and a padded seat cushion to make posting up comfortable and easy. The vest comes in SM/MD, LG/XL and 2XL/3XL.



## STEELHEAD OUTDOORS

(612) 326-4244  
steelheadoutdoors.com

Steelhead Outdoors introduces the **CASE KEEPER** to expand storage options on the outside of gun safes. The magnetic accessory is designed to attach to the upper corner of a safe and can hold a maximum of 30 lbs. A stainless steel rod with eight stainless steel hooks attaches to the exterior corner of a safe by a magnet-backed steel bracket. S-hooks provide an adjustable system capable of holding soft cases, game calls, rangefinders, optics or other items capable of hanging on a hook. Case Keeper will work on any 18" deep safe from any gun safe manufacturer and fits on all Steelhead Outdoors modular gun safes.



## ALIEN GEAR HOLSTERS

(208) 215-2046  
aliengearholsters.com

Alien Gear Holsters adds to its Rapid Force Duty Gear Line with the **SWIVEL DROP LEG EXTENSION**. The Swivel Drop Leg is a single-strap, quick-disconnect system (QDS), drop leg holster extension that uses a swivel design to move in tandem with the user's leg. The movement system allows for a new range of movement, increasing overall mobility without sacrificing security. The Swivel Drop Leg extension covers less leg space, and an easy reach for a secure draw and reholster. It offers an adjustable ride height for low, middle and high and works with the Alien Gear Locking Belt Slide and other QDS mounts. The Rapid Force Swivel Drop Leg system functions seamlessly with the Rapid Force LVL 2 Slim Holster and the Level 2 and 3 Rapid Force Duty Holster.



940 PRO TACTICAL HOLOSUN MICRO DOT COMBO

## O.F. MOSSBERG & SONS INC.

(203) 230-5300  
mossberg.com

Mossberg's **940 PRO TACTICAL OPTIC-READY** (85152) standard eight-shot shotgun has receiver cuts to accept the direct mounting of low-profile, micro dot sights (Shield RMSc footprint) and includes a cover plate for when an optic is not in use. The receiver is drilled and tapped for the option of adding rail-mounted optics. Features include an 18.5" AccuChoke-compatible barrel, black synthetic stock and forend and matte metal finish. The **940 PRO TACTICAL HOLOSUN MICRO DOT COMBO** (85161) eight-shot version comes equipped with Holosun's HS407K open reflex optic sight. HS407K specifications include up to 50,000 hours of battery life, 6 MOA dot, 12 brightness settings and Shake Awake technology. It has an 18.5" AccuChoke-compatible barrel, black synthetic stock and forend, matte metal finish and drilled and tapped receiver.

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**V-SLIDE OUTSIDE THE  
WAISTBAND HOLSTER**

## VERSACARRY

(979) 778-2000  
versacarry.com

With Versacarry's **INSURGENT MAG CARRIER**, users can carry two spare magazines — inside or outside with waistband. The custom-molded polymer front and adjustable retention keep spare magazines in place. When using the Insurgent Mag Carrier as an IWB holster, it is held securely in place with the Versacarry metal clips. For use OWB, the clips can be easily removed and the large leather belt loops keep the holster in place. The carrier accommodates double-stack magazines for a variety of popular firearms.

The **REBEL 2.0 INSIDE THE WAISTBAND HOLSTER** comes with an attached mag pouch and features a closed cell foam padded comfort backing. Its custom-molded polymer front delivers a secure fit for the firearm and magazine pouch. Adjustable retention screws secure draws, and the polymer front has an open bottom to accommodate threaded barrels. Color choices include Distressed Brown, black and Gun Metal Gray with khaki thread. The Rebel 2.0 fits a wide range of popular firearms.

The optics-compatible **V-SLIDE OUTSIDE THE WAISTBAND HOLSTER** boasts a minimal design with a smaller footprint, allowing it to be worn in a variety of positions. It has a custom-molded polymer front to fit many popular firearm models, and an open bottom to accommodate threaded barrels. Two belt loops keep the V-Slide securely in place when in use, and the small design allows it to fit in between pant belt loops for easy positioning. It's available in Distressed Brown, black and Gun Metal Gray with khaki thread.

## SCHRADE

(800) 251-0254  
schrade.com

Finish and function meet a mix of modern and primal design elements in the **STEEL DRIVER DROP POINT FIXED BLADE** knife from Schrade. It offers a balanced feel and exceptional cutting capabilities. The G10 handles ensure a solid grip, while the AUS-8 steel provides a desirable balance of sharpness, functionality and edge retention. The 4.75"-thick profile black-oxide blade provides exceptional toughness.



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## NUKEM HUNTING

(828) 775-5654  
nukemhunting.com

The increased overall length and height of Nukem Hunting's **GRAB & GO HUNTING BLIND XL** offers hunters more concealment, the option to hunt out of a chair and ability to conceal two hunters. These advantages come while maintaining the same lightweight, low-profile design and maneuverability as the original. The XL blind is available in TrueTimber HTC Green, TrueTimber Strata, Mossy Oak New Bottomland and Mossy Oak Obsession. Features of the blind include: 150 Denier nylon construction, light weight (3.5 lbs.), collapses into carrying case with total length of 38", stake-free design, extends over 9' wide, adjustable height (45–60"), set up or take down in less than one minute and stubble straps.



## GPO USA

(844) 692-4667  
gpo-usa.com



4-12X50i RIFlescope

The **SPECTRA 6X 1.5-9X44i** is now available with the all-purpose G4i reticle designed to enhance the shooter's ability to make fast and accurate shot placements even in the lowest light conditions. It is powered by the proprietary iCONTROL illumination system that can be adjusted between barely visible for low-light conditions or extremely bright for daylight use. This scope is also available with the G4i Drop reticle.

The **6X 4.5-27X50i SFP** long-range hunting riflescope has a 50mm objective lens system and variable power range for ample magnification for both close and long-range shots. This scope comes standard with DoubleHD objective lens technology with fully-multi coated lenses, iCONTROL illumination, PASSIONtrac ZERO-STOP-LOCK turrets to assist the shooting scenario. The turrets provide +/- 30"/MOA of adjustment range at 100 yards.

The **GPOTAC FFP SCOPE** line expands with a new reticle designed for competition and enhanced turret to show multiple rotations. The 50mm double HD objective lens system enhances resolution and the 34mm main tube built from a solid, one-piece aluminum block is dust-proof, waterproof and nitrogen-filled for strength and durability. The 4.5-27X50i GPOTAC FFP Tactical riflescope comes with a throw lever, cleaning cloth, see-through bikini ocular and objective lens scope covers and an extra CR2032 battery.

The **15-45X60 TACTICAL SPOTTING SCOPE** features the same reticle as the first focal plane GPOTAC 4.5-27X50i FFP Tactical riflescope. It features a variable 15-45X eyepiece, a 60mm objective lens to gather any and all available light, a 60° field of view at maximum power and its compact size and weight make it easy to transport. It's available in two colors: black and brown.

The **4-12X50i RIFlescope** joins GPO's 1" tube PASSION 3X scope line and features ample field of view, quick adjust turrets, fast focus ocular and generous eye relief. It's powered by the proprietary iCONTROL illumination system that features a fiber optic illuminated micro dot which can be adjusted between barely visible for low-light conditions or extremely bright for daylight use. Additional features include a 1" main tube, proprietary GPObright high-transmission lens coating technology, PassionDrop hydrophobic exterior lens coatings and double HD glass objective lens.

## ELITE ARCHERY

(877) 503-5483  
elitearchery.com

Elite Archery's **ERA** delivers innovative performance and a premium finish. The Era integrates Elite's signature dual cage riser that adds rigidity through key transition areas while premium hand-laid carbon makes up the body of the bow's 3.95-lb. weight and 31.25" platform. The 7.25" brace height, along with shorter, wider limbs, create a rock-solid platform and unparalleled forgiveness, and all-new high-performing, SP cam delivers speeds up to 336 fps. The Era boasts the industry's first V2 micro let-off, allowing users to fine tune the holding weight down to within the 70–90% range, and the 1/4" draw-length adjustment enables archers to tune their precise draw length.



## ESCORT SHOTGUNS

(877) 278-4448  
escortshotgunsusa.com

The **ESCORT SDX** is part of Hatsan's Versatile Tactical Shotgun (VTS) series and is offered in 12 GA or .410 in black or FDE Cerakote. The gas-operated, semi-automatic shotgun has a reversible bolt-charging handle for ambidextrous operation, fixed tactical stock with integrated pistol grip, elevation-adjustable comb, soft rubber butt pad, detachable alloy upper receiver and advanced polymer lower receiver, Picatinny rails, ThermoDefend forend with ergonomic grip, manual trigger safety switch, detachable carrying handle, adjustable rear sight built into the carrying handle, adjustable front sight, optional flip-up front and rear sight set included and sling loops.



**S3 STEEL  
WATERFOWL**

## APEX AMMUNITION

**(662) 441-2739**

[apexammunition.com](http://apexammunition.com)

APEX Ammunition introduces its limited edition **MOSSY OAK SHADOW GRASS HABITAT WATERFOWL BLEND**. Available in 3" 12 GA shells, this handcrafted "duplex load" combines No. 8 TSS with No. 3 S3 zinc-plated steel for a versatile, hard-hitting load. The zinc coating ensures uniform pellets for optimum patterning in a steel load and, when combined with 18.1 g/cc TSS, helps deliver a harder hitting payload with improved terminal performance to reduce crippling.

**S3 STEEL WATERFOWL** shotshells are now offered in No. 3 shot. Available in 3", 12 and 20 GA loads, the APEX Waterfowl S3 Steel ammo features premium zinc-plated steel to ensure consistently round pellets with anti-corrosion properties and superior patterning performance. The zinc coating reduces friction, resulting in more consistent pellet drop when loading the shotshells and better movement of the pellets against each other in the firing process.

## SK GUNS

**(844) 475-4867**

[skguns.com](http://skguns.com)

The **SK BESPOKE COLLECTION** from SK Guns features beautifully hand-carved 24k gold, fine .999 silver and pure platinum-inlaid one-of-ones, including some of the rarest select Colt firearms left untouched. The collection's matchless Colt guns were hand selected from a variety of collectors and estates. Select Bespoke collectibles feature a custom display case. Items currently available include The 500: Colt Government Model MK IV Series 70 1911 in .45 ACP; The 1836: Colt Python in .357 Mag; The Gold Cup Belt: Colt Gold Cup National Match 1911 in .45 ACP; The M1908 Type IV: Colt Pocket Hammerless in .380 ACP; The Mayberry: Colt Official Police Model in .38 Special; The Oakleaf: Colt Combat Commander 1911 in 9mm; The Serpent: Colt Diamondback in .22 LR; and The Signature Diamond: Colt Diamondback in .22 LR.



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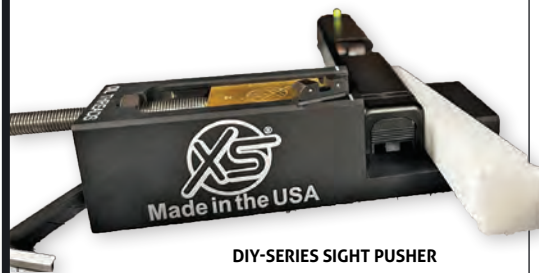
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## STURM, RUGER & CO.

(336) 949-5200  
ruger.com

Ruger introduces the latest addition to its Lite Rack family of pistols, the **RUGER SECURITY-380**, chambered in .380 Auto and designed for new shooters and those who struggle with racking traditional slides. It features a blued through-hardened alloy steel slide and barrel. The slide has a vertical ledge on the steel rear sight and a fiber-optic front sight. The system includes refined slide serrations, pronounced cocking ears and a lighter recoil spring to ensure easy manipulation of the slide. The fire-control system boasts an integrated trigger safety, external manual safety, neutrally balanced sear and strong spring tension and a hammer catch. The trigger has a short, smooth trigger pull, clean break and positive reset.



DIY-SERIES SIGHT PUSHER  
INSTALL KIT FOR GLOCK

## XS SIGHTS

(888) 744-4880  
xssights.com

XS Sights' **DIY-SERIES SIGHT PUSHER INSTALL KIT FOR GLOCK** allows users to easily complete a range of sight installs on all GLOCK slides, including optic/suppressor-height sights. The process of installing and removing sights requires up to 50% less force with the XS tool than other available sight pushers due to the low placement of the pusher bit. When installing optic and suppressor-height sights on GLOCK MOS and aftermarket optic cut slides, the optic and factory plate cover must be installed before mounting the tool on the slide. The kit includes the sight pusher with stainless steel bolt, locking wedge, Allen key, Go/No-Go gauges, steel GLOCK front sight tool oil and threadlocker. It weighs 1.4 lbs., and is rated for 50–100 sight installations.

The **GUNSMITH SERIES** offers the fastest GLOCK sight installation. It comes with a T-handle for even more leverage and easier turning to slide the rear sight. The handle doubles as a front sight tool and both it and the tool bolt are equipped with magnets. This series fits all GLOCK OEM and aftermarket slides and is GLOCK MOS compatible for easy installation of sights with a red dot sight mounted on the pistol. The kit includes the professional grade rear sight pusher with steel black oxide bolt, multi-function T-handle/magnetic steel GLOCK front sight tool, Go/No-Go gauges for trouble shooting and built-in centering scale. It weighs 1.8 lbs., and is rated for 200+ sight installations.

## FALCO HOLSTERS

+421 903 430 057  
falcoholsters.com

The **C142 LVL 2 RETENTION PREMIUM LEATHER PANCAKE-STYLE HOLSTER** from FALCO is purpose-built for EDC outside the waistband (OWB). It features MLC Security Lock Technology, an integrated thumb break and qualifies for Level 2 duty use. The C142 is available with a slight forward cant for enhanced concealment, or straight OWB on-the-hip carry. Widely positioned belt slots on both sides of the holster keep the handgun snug to the body for high stability and excellent concealment under clothing. Every holster features intricate artisan attention, including hand-dyed, oiled and finished leather. FALCO also offers options for personalization such as optics-ready choices, edge and stitching color.



## WILDEAR

(855) 494-9453  
wildear.com

**SAFEARZ** ready-fit earplugs from WildEar are available with three distinct filter options: Shooter, Everyday and Toggle. The Shooter filter reduces high-intensity sounds such as gunfire, while still allowing the user to engage in conversation and hear ambient sounds. The Everyday filter turns down the volume (noise) without sacrificing listening quality and is ideal for activities with moderate noise. The Toggle option engages the Everyday filter when the toggle is in the open position and offers full protection when the toggle is closed for users who are in and out of noisy environments. SafeEarz incorporates a three-flange earplug design for a tight but comfortable fit in the ear canal, with four sizes. Each package includes one set of the selected filter, a lanyard and a convenient storage case.



## FAST AND FRIENDLY BRASS

(618) 401-0196  
fastandfriendlybrass.com

The **BRASS COLLATOR** from Fast and Friendly has a 16" diameter bowl and can collate between 12,000 to 13,400 pieces per hour with 5.56/.223 or pistol calibers. Pistol calibers can collate at up to 15,000 pieces per hour. It will run virtually jam free due to the means of collation, and can work with nearly any brass available. An electronic control box is able to detect jams and will stop the collator, preventing equipment wear and tear. The Collator runs on a 1/8 HP motor, yet it draws only 1.6 amps.



## HEVI-SHOT

(541) 367-3522  
hevishot.com

HEVI-Shot's **HEVI-18 TSS TURKEY LOADS** boast 18 g/cc density pellets, allowing for smaller shot and higher pellet counts for the ultimate in long-range lethality. Incredibly tight patterns are owed to a unique, friction-free, sealed-in-the-shell spherical buffer. With HEVI-18 being 48% more dense than lead, shooters can drop down at three shot sizes for similar downrange lethality when compared to lead turkey loads. This means instead of shooting shot size 4 or 6 lead loads, hunters can shoot shot size 7 or 9 TSS, thus taking advantage of higher pellet counts. Loads are offered in 12 GA (2 3/4", No. 9, 1,090 fps) and 20 GA (2 3/4", No. 9, 1,200 fps).



## TRUETIMBER

(864) 472-1720  
truetimber.com

The **ADRENALINE PARKA AND PANT** feature TrueTimber's proven TrueSuede fabric, a 100% polyester brushed micro-fiber outer shell that allows for silent movement and the durable membrane backing offers protection from the wind and rain. The 100% nylon interior contains 3M Thinsulate fill that delivers serious insulation without bulk. The parka has a zip-off removable hood, two hand warmer and two chest pockets, hidden adjustable shock cords to control hood and waist, safety harness opening and built-in license holder, nylon inner cuff with thumbhole to keep wind out and is available in TrueTimber Strata and Kanati camo. The pant has knee-high zippers to fit over boots, six pockets and is available in TrueTimber Strata and Kanati camo.

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## SMITH & WESSON

(800) 331-0852  
smith-wesson.com

Smith & Wesson's 9mm **EQUALIZER** strikes the ideal balance of power and capacity across 10, 13 and 15-round magazines. It features a single-action trigger allowing for a short take-up, clean break and fast reset for faster follow-up shots. The slide operates using easy-to-track technology to cater to a wide variety of needs and the frame includes a Picatinny-style rail to mount lights or lasers. A new optic cut pattern allows the user to mount their choice of sight for enhanced accuracy and the 3.675" barrel gives a longer sight radius for increased iron sight precision. The **EQUALIZER** also features a new grip texture and pattern designed to give users more control when firing and more comfort when carrying.

The **PERFORMANCE CENTER M&P9 M2.0 COMPETITOR** comes with a 5" barrel, an enhanced sear for lighter, crisper trigger let-off and a flared magazine well. Aggressive lightening cuts on both the top and sides of the slide reduce the amount of weight in front of the chamber and help improve the recoil balance point. The slide is cut for optics, includes a fiber optic front sight and blacked out serrated rear sight. The Competitor comes with an oversized reversible mag release for both right- and left-handed users and ships with four magazines. Models are available in 10+1 or 17+1 round capacities with a Tungsten Gray Cerakote or black Armornite slide finish.



**EQUALIZER**



## C&H PRECISION WEAPONS

(912) 445-5803  
chpws.com

C&H Precision Weapons has **TWO NEW MOUNTS** for Holosun's EPS and EPS Carry optics. C&H's plates are customized specifically for these new optics. Adaptor plates are currently available for compact and full-size GLOCK MOS, Springfield Hellcat with RMSc footprint and the Staccato Duo.



**HOWA CARBON FLAG CHASSIS**



**POINTER .410 SEMI AUTO WALNUT CERAKOTE**

## LEGACY SPORTS INTERNATIONAL

(775) 828-0555  
legacysports.com

From Citadel: The **CENTURION CP9** in 9mm features a 4" barrel, 804 trigger, front and rear serrations, optic-ready slide, GLOCK comp sights (black), textured frame and includes one 10-round magazine. It's available in black or Cerakote Flag. Features of the 12 GA **COACH SIDE BY SIDE** include an 18" chrome-lined barrel, 3" chamber, Turkish walnut stock and checkered forend and grip. It boasts a single crisp trigger, barrel selector, metal bead front sights and five chokes. The **45 LONG COLT LEVTAC** and **LEVTAC .410** large loop lever actions have an 18" barrel, modular M-LOK forend and black synthetic stock. The **TRAKR SERIES** of semi-auto and bolt-action rifles feature an American Flag, OD Green or FDE stock. The OD Green and FDE models are available in .22 LR, .17 HMR and .22 WM while the American Flag model is chambered in .22 LR.

Howa releases the **CARBON FLAG CHASSIS** in 6.5 Creedmoor or .308 Win. Highlights include a Howa 1500 24" carbon fiber barrel, bipod, two-stage HACT trigger, three-position safety, Luth-AR buttstock, two adjustable grips and three magazines. Color choices offered are RWB (red, white and blue) and gray. The **HERA H7 SERIES** is an easy-to-use stock system for the Howa short action system. Made of fiberglass-reinforced polymer, aluminum V-block and forestock, the system comes with two spacers, a polymer cheekpiece support and two five-round magazines.

From Pointer, features of the **.410 SEMI AUTO WALNUT CERAKOTE** include: 28" chrome-lined barrels, raised vent ribs, fiber optic front sight, Turkish walnut stock and forend, ventilated buttstock, Cerakoted receiver (bronze or gray) and five choke tubes. The **SIDE BY SIDE** is offered in 12 GA and boasts a 28" chrome-lined barrel, checkered forend and grip, single crisp trigger, metal bead front sights, barrel selector, extractors, 3" chamber, Turkish walnut and five chokes.



## THROOM TARGETS

(732) 469-5654  
throomtargets.com

**GLOW IN THE DARK TARGETS** from Throom allow users to shoot in a dark, black-lit range. The targets are permanently infused with a special phosphorescent pigment for a permanent, lifelong glow. The glow-in-the-dark targets are ideal for after-dark law enforcement training or for a fun time with friends at the range.



**SJK**

**(800) 233-6283**  
sjkgear.com

Oversized for a more "bed-like" experience, the **NORTH FORK** sleeping bag from SJK makes it easy to get a good night's sleep as cooler temps roll in. For couples, the two-way self-repairing zipper is great to zip two bags together, while the cotton duck exterior and brushed cotton flannel liner provide the utmost in cool weather overnight comfort. The North Fork has a carry weight of 10.3 lbs., is 80" long, fits to 6.5' and has SlumberLoft insulation. The attached elastic straps assist in easy transport and storage. A stuff sack is included.



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## SPARTAN ARMOR SYSTEMS

**(520) 396-3335**

spartanarmorsystems.com

Spartan Armor Systems' new Flex Fused Core **LEVEL IIIA SOFT BODY ARMOR BACKPACK PANELS** are designed to fit VIKTOS brand backpacks and the VIKTOS Kadre Tactical Backpack and are available in bundles for the Perimeter 40 & 25, Kadre Tactical and the Upscale CCW Sling Bag. The soft armor panel for the Upscale Sling Bag has a strip of hook-and-loop to keep the panel securely fastened in the bag to eliminate interference when drawing a pistol out of the bag. The comfortable and lightweight plates conform to the backpack chambers for convenient carry and added protection against ballistic threats. Made from the highest-grade composite ballistic materials available, the plates are rated to stop .44 Mag, SJHP as well as Special Threat Rated to stop .357 SIG FMJ.



**GOLD MEDAL ACTION PISTOL**



**FEDERAL PREMIUM BUCKSHOT 1 BUCK**

## FEDERAL AMMUNITION

**(800) 379-1732**

federalpremium.com

**FEDERAL'S PREMIUM GOLD MEDAL CENTERSTRIKE** leverages a proprietary open tip match design, sleek profile and extremely tight specifications for the ultimate long-range accuracy and consistency. It's available in .308 Win., 6.5 Creedmoor and .223 Rem.

Designed specifically for action shooting sports, **GOLD MEDAL ACTION PISTOL** offers even better accuracy and consistency than original Gold Medal, and it's loaded to power-factor requirements. The fully encapsulated FMJ bullet and Catalyst lead-free primer deliver cleaner shooting. It's available in 9mm Luger and .40 S&W.

**FEDERAL PREMIUM BUCKSHOT 1 BUCK** delivers a payload of 16 copper-plated pellets, producing tight patterns for more hits and better stopping power on predators, hogs and more. It's available in 12 GA 2 3/4" shotshells.

**PAPER WAD** options are now available in select Top Gun lead and steel shotshell loads. Federal engineers combined an exclusive paper wad with a cellulose-based filler to maintain downrange patterns. The paper wad additions are built with a select, clean-burning propellant and a paper gas-sealing over-powder wad. Shotshells are available for 12 GA in four offerings — two steel shot versions with 7.5 shot size and two lead offerings in 7.5 or 8 shot sizes.





## SAVAGE ARMS

(800) 370-0708  
savagearms.com

New for 2023, the **SAVAGE 1911** is built from stainless steel and has a dual recoil spring and machined sear and disconnector. Features include a 5" stainless steel barrel with 11° target crown; lowered, flared and cut ejection port; nitride coated titanium firing pin; Novak Lo-Mount adjustable tritium bar rear sight and tritium Mega Dot Glow Dome Yellow front sight (Rail and Two-Tone versions); Novak Lo-Mount Black rear sight and white dot front sight (stainless and black Melonite non-rail versions); ambidextrous slide lock safety; and VZ G10 Grips. The Gov't-style models are available in .45 Auto or 9mm.

**110 CARBON PREDATOR** models boast matte-black carbon steel receiver, AccuStock with AccuFit technology with granite texture, two sling swivel studs, two-piece Weaver-style bases, exclusive PROOF Research carbon fiber wrapped stainless steel cut rifled barrel with threaded muzzle, 2.5–6-lb. user-adjustable AccuTrigger and AICS detachable box magazine.

The **IMPULSE MOUNTAIN HUNTER** straight pull bolt-action rifle has a user-adjustable AccuTrigger (1.5–4 lbs.); ambidextrous, removable, multi-positional bolt handle, aluminum receiver with integral one piece 20 MOA rail, adjustable LOP and comb height with AccuFit technology, AccuStock technology with three dimensional aluminum bedding, Savage-designed PROOF Research carbon fiber wrapped stainless steel barrel, two sling swivel studs, two-position tang safety, rugged, gray synthetic stock and muzzle brake.

The **555 SPORTING** over/under 12 GA shotgun has a lightweight aluminum alloy receiver scaled to gauge and incorporates a steel insert that reinforces the breech to minimize weight and maximize strength. The 30" chrome-lined barrels are ported to reduce recoil. Added features include a raised, ventilated rib with mid-bead, Turkish walnut stock and forend, adjustable cheek riser and a front fiber optic sight.



## CREEDMOOR SPORTS

(800) 273-3366  
creedmoorsports.com

The **ADAPTIVE PRESS HEAD** is the flagship product in a new eco-system of premium reloading tools from Creedmoor Sports. The Adaptive Press Head incorporates the Adaptive Wedge System which supports multiple die sizes, including 7/8" and 1/4". The wedges allow the handloader to set up their dies one time and simply exchange wedge/die sets in the press head as needed. It is also a true direct drop-in upgrade that can be installed in a matter of minutes. Manufactured to exacting tolerances from stainless steel, these press heads offer a premium finish, higher corrosion and wear resistance and high-quality thread.



## TRUE

(800) 255-6061  
true.acgbrands.com

The **PLASMA LIGHTER XR** from TRUE boasts 300+ activations on a single charge. With plasma arc technology, the extendable and flexible neck ignitor can be positioned in any direction for difficult combustion areas and is windproof up to 80 mph. Rugged ABS and zinc alloy construction ensure durability and impact resistance. The locking cover protects the sensitive electrodes while also providing IPX6 water resistance. The lighter boasts a UCB-C rechargeable port and a visible LED charge indicator. Overall, a full charge from empty is possible within 1.5 hours.



## TACSHIELD

(910) 637-0315  
tacshield.com

The **RZR MOLLE BELT KIT** from TacShield includes a RZR MOLLE gun belt, inner belt, one-handed TQ pouch, universal equipment pouch, double pistol speedload pouch, double rifle speedload pouch and G.P./NVG pouch. It's available in Coyote, black or OCP in sizes S–XL.

STINGER RS .22LR



## BOND ARMS

(817) 573-4445  
bondarms.com

From Bond Arms, the **22LR RAWHIDE** is ideal for plinking and economical practice at the range. Features include a stainless steel 2.5" Rough Series-style barrel, frame and finish, rebounding hammer, retracting firing pins, cross-bolt safety, nylon panel grips and single-action interchangeable barrels. OAL is 4.5" and it weighs 21 oz.

Weighing 16 oz., the **STINGER RS .22LR** is suited for EDC, packed in a saddlebag or a backup truck gun. Features include a stainless steel 3" Rough Series-style barrel, frame and finish, rebounding hammer, retracting firing pins, cross-bolt safety and thin nylon grip. OAL is 5".

## ARCTICSHIELD

(320) 252-2056  
arcticshieldoutdoor.com

ArcticShield's **PRODIGY SERIES** apparel line is constructed with the ASPECT camouflage colorway developed in collaboration with Realtree. The Prodigy layering system is built for all weather conditions and utilizes the ArcticShield X-System Plus dual-action odor and scent-protection technology, 37.5 technology and ArcticShield Retain Active technology. The lightweight Prodigy jacket and pant wick moisture away to keep users dry and comfortable when the action or temperature heats up. The Prodigy Vapor pullover, vest, jacket, pant, beanie and neck gaiter add another layer of protection. The final layer of protection when the temperature drops further comes from the Prodigy Sentinel Insulated jacket and pant.



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## KOR

(480) 549-0044  
korcases.com

KOR's 5er Vacuum Rigidizing Structure (VRS) technology is a revolutionary foam replacement system that retrofits existing gun cases, making them truly universal. The **VRS UNIVERSAL GUN CASE INSERT** conforms precisely to firearms and other equipment by enveloping everything stored in the case. Once the foam is removed from the original case, the KOR 5er insert is placed at the bottom of the case, the guns and gear requiring transportation are added and the included pump vacuums the air out of the insert's bladder. There's no need to disassemble optics and accessories from the firearm. The KOR 5er VRS System delivers a customizable turnkey solution for virtually any long gun.



## ET ARMS INC.

(888) 491-3150  
etarms.us

ET Arms Inc. introduces the **PLUMCRAZY GENERATION 2 AR-15** pistol. It comes standard with a 7.5" 1:8" twist barrel chambered in 5.56x45mm and an M-LOK 7" handguard. Patented upper and lower receivers with metal overmold inserts make it one of the strongest AR pistols. It boasts a Saf-T-First trigger and includes a 30-round magazine.





## PREMIER BODY ARMOR

(704) 214-9951

[premierbodyarmor.com](http://premierbodyarmor.com)

From Premier Body Armor, the **DISCREET PLATE CARRIER** provides rifle-rated protection in a uniquely discreet way. The SAPI plate shape accommodates all 10x12 plates including SAPI, Shooter and Swimmer's cuts. Vertical load-bearing MOLLE webbing offers flexibility for accessories, including the DPC's line of accessories like the MAAP pouch. The fully adjustable cummerbund includes pouches for full-size magazines, comms devices or medical equipment. Virtually invisible under a button-down or jacket, the plate carrier is both versatile and concealable. The carrier is built not just for functionality, but comfort as well with its inner mesh liner for breathability and diagonally articulating shoulder position. The durable elastic cummerbund makes the carrier fully adjustable, and comes in a one-size-fits-most size.

## SPYDERCO

(800) 525-7770  
[spyderco.com](http://spyderco.com)

Spyderco's **LEAFJUMPER** features skeletonized stainless steel liners, fiberglass-reinforced-nylon (FRN) scales, non-slip Bi-Directional Texturing, four-position pocket clip, stout back lock mechanism and positive self-close function. Its VG-10 stainless steel blade also has a minimal ricasso (the unbeveled, full-thickness area nearest the handle) to offer the maximum edge length. Its unique leaf-shaped blade is full-flat ground, satin finished and available in PlainEdge and SpyderEdge formats. It features a slightly upswept edge profile that raises and reinforces its point, increasing its versatility for many applications.



## STACCATO

(512) 819-0656  
[staccato2011.com](http://staccato2011.com)

The compact 9mm **STACCATO CS** houses a 3.5" bull barrel, is 5.6" tall, 1.45" wide (at safeties) and is 7" long. Features include a fiber optic front sight; Dawson Precision rear sight; 4-4.5-lb. aluminum, long curve, anodized trigger; and black DLC finish on the slide. The Staccato CS weighs 22.7 oz. (unloaded), and includes three 16-round magazines.



RAW .308

## RED ARROW WEAPONS

(833) 940-0068  
[redarrowweapons.com](http://redarrowweapons.com)

Red Arrow Weapons expands its lineup with a **.308** model. Dependable, versatile and accurate, RAW .308 models pair the knockdown power of the caliber with the company's sub-MOA barrel and the 2.5-lb. single-stage trigger for premium performance. The firearms feature premium nitride and Cerakote finishes. An ambidextrous selector and M-LOK handrail are included.

New **9MM** options offer a choice between midsize models with a 9" or 7" handguard. Both include a recessed 3" blast can to push percussion and gases forward for an improved user experience. The 9mm models also come outfitted with premium upgrades, including an ambidextrous selector, integrated hand stop, a 2.5-lb. single-stage trigger and three Cerakote color options.

## VIRIDIAN WEAPON TECHNOLOGIES

(763) 479-4091  
[viridianweapontech.com](http://viridianweapontech.com)

Viridian now offers its **E SERIES GREEN LASER SIGHTS** for the SIG SAUER P365XL and **E SERIES RED LASERS** for the Heritage Rough Rider .22 Single-Action Revolver. Both sights are designed to easily fit onto the pistol's trigger guard, hold up to the toughest conditions and provide 6+ hours of battery life with a constant laser. These sights feature an ambidextrous On/Off button with 5-minute auto shutoff, are powered by a 1/3N battery and quickly mount with tools included in the package. The E Series Red Laser is also windage and elevation adjustable.



## CCI AMMUNITION

(866) 286-7436

[cci-ammunition.com](http://cci-ammunition.com)

CCI's **CLEAN-22 HYPER VELOCITY** .22 LR rounds clock in at 1,550 fps, while the advanced polymer coating on the 31-grain lead round-nose bullet reduces fouling, especially in suppressed rimfires. Clean-22 cuts lead buildup in suppressors 60 to 80%. The optimized bullet geometry improves accuracy, and its high-velocity loading and reliable function is evident in semi-autos.



## DRYSHOD

(800) 333-0895

[dryshodusa.com](http://dryshodusa.com)

Dryshod's **EVALUSION** series of waterproof footwear utilizes an all-new outsole design delivering maximum grip across rugged and traction-challenging ground. A 5mm Densoprene foam insulated bootie treated with Hydrokote water repellent helps shed water and mud. Inside, a four-way stretch breathable airmesh lining helps keep feet dry in hot weather and warm when the temperatures dip. Other features include hand-laid natural rubber overlays, an easy-on/easy-off design with a roll-down calf pipe, back-pull tabs and a latex-infused fabric underlayment for added puncture resistance. The Evalusion Hunt is 16" tall and offered with a DS camo pattern. The Evalusion Hi has an extended calf pipe and overall 16" height. The low-cut Evalusion Ankle boot is available in brown, black or camo.



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## CRKT

(800) 891-3100

[crkt.com](http://crkt.com)

The **TACO VIPER** joins CRKT's Forged by War Program and was inspired by designer Antonio Rodriguez' experience in the 82nd Airborne division. With its assisted-opening flipper, the Taco Viper brings heavy-duty cutting capabilities into a tactical folding knife suitable for EDC as well. It boasts a 4.22" razor sharp, high-carbon stainless steel blade with Veff serrations, a durable and lightweight glass reinforced nylon handle, convenient and safe liner lock and a low-profile pocket clip for secure carry. An optional sheath and coiled tether keep the knife secure.



## GAMAKATSU

(253) 922-8373

[gamakatsu.com](http://gamakatsu.com)

Gamakatsu introduces a series of EDC knives with four different-sized folding knives to choose from. The **GMKT1** has a 3.25" drop-point blade with a plain edge, stonewash finish and a blackwash stainless steel handle. The **GMKT2** features a 2.75" drop-point blade with a two-toned satin finish and a plain edge. The handle material is stainless steel with a bluwash finish. **GMKT3**, the largest knife in the series, has a partially serrated 3.625" stonewash finish blade. It has a G10 front handle scale and stonewash steel back handle. The **GMKT4** boasts a 3.5" Tanto-style blade with black oxide finish and a plain edge. It features a G10/carbon fiber overlay and black oxide steel handle.



GMKT1



## BRAVO CONCEALMENT

(956) 783-7682

bravoconcealment.com

The **LINKED** holster from Bravo Concealment combines patented Torsion Technology with an accessible mag pouch. Using just a few screws, a clever but simple design secures a mag pouch and belt clip to the standard Torsion IWB holster so the user can appendix both at once. Designed to be adjustable for comfort, the LINKed holster puts a secondary mag at the user's fingertips. By integrating the mag pouch with Torsion Technology found in the company's IWB gun holsters, the extra magazine access is also comfortably tucked closer to the body. The LINKed holster includes an intelligently placed cutout to prevent digging while in a sitting position. It also lacks extra material on the bottom of the holster that could get in the way.



## ASP INC.

(800) 236-6243

asp-usa.com

ASP's **SENTRY HANDCUFFS** feature I-beam-inspired frames made of corrosion-resistant stainless steel. The dimensional profile of the double bars provides strength without excessive bulk. Combined, a precision roller bearing pivot and forged steel bow yields a hitch-free, smooth swing. The frame and bow are manufactured to eliminate sharp edges and rough surfaces, reducing the risk of subject discomfort or injury. Sentry Cuffs offer a variety of features found in ASP's Ultra Cuff restraint family including dual-sided keyways and double lock slots. The bows have flat contact zones so they apply more precisely and safely. A single-direction key turn releases double lock and then bow, and also allows for "loosen and lock" adjustment.



## BUSHNELL

(800) 423-3537

bushnell.com

The Bushnell **MATCH PRO ED 5-30X56 FFP RIFlescope** offers exceptional optical performance built around an ED (Extra-Low Dispersion) Prime 56mm objective with EXO Barrier coating for protection against the elements. The 34mm main tube realizes a 30 MIL (103 MOA) elevation range. Both turrets lock while the elevation turret has an integral Easy Set zero stop and two-stage pop-up rev-indicator. It boasts 11 brightness settings with alternating off intervals and a six-hour auto-off timer to increase battery life. The scope's adjustable close-range, 15-yard parallax side-focus also makes it ideal for rimfire plinking as well as NRL22 and PRS Rimfire competition. And the removable, three-position power change lever can be configured for left- or right-handed shooters.



MULE



10/22 ROTARY MAG CASE

## MTM CASE-GARD

(937) 890-7461

mtmcase-gard.com

MTM's **10/22 ROTARY MAG CASE** offers compact protection for up to six Ruger 10/22 rotary magazines in an easy to view, stackable container. It also fits six 17 HMR and 22 WMR magazines.

The **10/22 EXTENDED MAG CAN** offers a protected method of storing and transporting loaded magazines. 10/22 magazines are individually secured used closed cell, military-grade foam padding that prevents bumping, sliding and scratching. It's stackable and O-ring sealed for protection from the elements. Two heavy-duty latches (with option for two padlocks) provide excellent security.

The **MULE** mobile gear crate is intended for gear of all shapes and sizes. It's divided into three compartments of various sizes and heights and the lift-out tray rides at either end of the crate. The Mule holds items up to 10.5" tall and has a removable divider. Tie-down points, four no-break snap latches, padlock tabs and a water-resistant O-ring seal keep gear safe, dry and easily transported. Its internal dimensions are 39"L x 11"W x 10.5"H and external dimensions are 43.5"L x 14.7"W x 11.5"H.



## STREAMLIGHT INC.

(800) 523-7488  
streamlight.com

Streamlight's ultra-compact TLR sub series of weapon-mounted lights now includes the addition of integrated lasers and next-generation interchangeable rear paddle switches. The **TLR-8 SUB** features an integrated red laser and the **TLR-8 G SUB** has an integrated green laser. Designed for use with railed subcompact weapons, both are available to fit select GLOCK, SIG SAUER, Springfield Armory and many 1913 short-railed subcompact handguns. The lights feature an LED that delivers 500 lumens over a beam distance of 141 meters and offer three lighting modes: LED only, LED/Laser combined and Laser only. A one-handed, snap on and tighten interface keeps hands away from muzzles when attaching or detaching.



## STEINER

(888) 550-6255  
steiner-optics.com

Boasting 8X zoom, **PREDATOR 8** riflescopes join the Steiner Predator 4 series and are offered in three different 8X zoom ranges: 2-16x42, 3-24x50 and 4-32x56. Features include: exceptional optical clarity, massive field of view, illuminated reticle with 11 brightness settings, audible and tactile 1/4 MOA ballistic turret, fog proof and waterproof design and broad operating temperature. The different numbered turret rings allow the shooter to customize the turret for quick elevation adjustment at pre-selected distances. The 2-16x42mm and 3-24x50mm riflescopes come with the Steiner E3 second focal plane reticle while the 4-32x56mm has a high magnification and SCR (Special Competition Reticle) combination.



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[jpsauer-usa.com](http://jpsauer-usa.com)

J.P. Sauer & Sohn introduces the **SL5 SELECT** shotgun. The walnut stock and forearm on the 12 GA, 3" semi-automatic shotgun is enhanced with laserline to highlight the walnut's natural beauty. The smooth-cycling SL5 Select is available in 26", 28" or 30" chrome-lined, stepped-rib barrels. The matte finished upper and lower receiver is made with aluminum for reduced weight and quick handling. All SL5 Select shotguns feature sling attachments, a Cervellati recoil pad and a red single-bead LPA front fiber-optic sight.



SAKO TRG 22A1 — COYOTE BROWN

## BERETTA

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[beretta.com](http://beretta.com)

Sako and Beretta announce TRG 22A1 and TRG 42A1 rifles are available in **FOUR NEW CERAKOTE FINISHES**: Tungsten Gray, Coyote Brown, Graphite Black and Olive Drab Green. The heart of the TRG is a Tri-lug bolt and action with a 60-degree bolt throw for quick and smooth lock and unlock. Sako-style ejectors provide reliable ejection and manufacturing to the finest tolerance provides the smoothness of loading and manipulation. TRG 22A1 and 42A1 rifles also now come standard with two magazines.

In a special promotion, Beretta is offering an **APX A1 FULL-SIZE OPTICS BUNDLE** including an APX A1 pistol with a factory-installed Burris FastFire 3 optic and optic plate. The APX A1 features a best-in-class trigger, serrated combat trigger guard, tritium front sight with white outline, red dot optic-ready slide, aggressive slide serrations, extended beavertail, ambidextrous slide release, reversible mag release and straight grip profile. The Burris FastFire 3 has an automatic brightness sensor and three manual brightness settings, a conveniently located battery access area, an automatic timeout feature and is available with a Picatinny/Weaver mount. The bundle also includes: one pistol case, two magazines, three interchangeable backstraps, one magazine loader, one cleaning rod and brush and one handgun cable-lock.





CHEST RIG

## SAFARILAND

(800) 347-1200  
safariland.com

The latest release from Safariland is the extremely popular 6354RDS and 6304RDS holsters wrapped in **TIGER STRIPE CORDURA CAMO**. The Tiger Stripe camo pattern will be available in the 6354RDS holster paired with the QLS 19 Locking Fork. This holster is specifically designed to fit firearms with red dot sights. The Automatic Locking System (ALS) is an internal locking device that retains the firearm in all directions providing an extra measure of security. The 6304RDS provides an additional measure of security, protecting the firearm with both the ALS and SLS (Self-Locking System) systems—two distinct retention devices that continue to set the standard for all duty-rated holsters.

The Safariland **CHEST RIG** (SCR) design is compatible with the company's 6000 series and 7TS holsters. When paired with these three-hole patterned holsters and coordinating accessories, the cant can be adjusted for enhanced accessibility. The quick-attachment buckle increases this accessibility by allowing for one-handed attachment. The injection molded nylon construction is extremely durable and made to last. The chest rig offers a replacement for standard belt attachment, making the chest rig a flexible option for alternate carry use.

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The **MEOSIGHT IV** red dot reflex sight is Meopta's smallest, weighing just 1.2 oz. Featuring 1X magnification, a 3 MOA dot and highly durable, aircraft-grade aluminum body, the Meo Sight IV has 120 MOA range of elevation and 120 MOA of windage adjustment. The illumination feature has a manual or automatic mode, and the brightness of the red dot is easily adjustable to five different intensity levels. It's powered by a Cr1632 3V battery. Its auto-off function preserves battery life by automatically turning the illumination off after four hours of continuous operation if the function button has not been touched.



## MDT SPORTING GOODS LTD.

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MDT adds the **MDT TIMBR FRONTIER—T3X SA** to their lineup of TIMBR Frontier chassis inlets. The MDT TIMBR Frontier Stock provides shooters with a beautiful fusion of warm wood and solid aluminum to create an accurate platform for their Tikka rifle. It features an adjustable buttstock and an M-LOK rail forend for accessories. Each TIMBR Frontier Chassis is constructed from a CNC machined core of 6061 aircraft grade aluminum mounted in a hardwood laminate, and fitted with aluminum rails and hardware. The precision aluminum V-block bedding system ensures fit and function to maximize the accuracy of any Remington or Tikka rifle action. The TIMBR Frontier Chassis has a replaceable over molded and textured grip system, with both an angled grip and a vertical grip included in box.

## LANGDON TACTICAL TECHNOLOGY

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langdontactical.com

Developed with Mitchell Booth, LTT introduces the **GRIP ANCHOR**, which slightly extends the grip of the gun to increase leverage on the heel of the hand for better control and to prevent pinching when reloading, without increasing the overall size of the gun. It also helps make the GLOCK 19 more concealable by smoothing the rear corner of the magazine and frame. It rounds the bottom profile of the gun for better concealment and comfort against the body. The Grip Anchor fills the gap in the mag well to prevent dirt and grime from reaching the firing mechanisms, resulting in better reliability. And the internal, smoothed, sloped edges of the Grip Anchor improve reloading speed and consistency. (GEN 3 GLOCK guns require the backstrap-version Grip Anchor as the non-backstrap version will not fit.)





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[steambow.com](https://steambow.com)

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## TRAILBLAZER FIREARMS

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Patented technology allows the **PIVOT** rifle to collapse in a unique way, maximizing portability when folded and function when unfolded. This ultracompact folding rifle is 20.9" long (when folded), with a full 16" threaded barrel and adjustable stock. The Pivot uses GLOCK-compatible magazines; an extra magazine can be stored in the stock.



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## THE WOMAN'S ISSUE RETURNS IN 2023!

In what will be *Shooting Industry's* fifth annual Woman's Issue, the March 2023 issue educates and empowers dealers to secure sales from this burgeoning segment.

### HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Why family education & range events are key to sustained success
- Concealed carry gear for women on the go
- How to make your facility more welcoming

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statement is valid. The only thing that apparently beats price is a better price," he said. "So, staying lean and mean is important in lean times. Only carry the 'milk and eggs' that sell in-store."

While competing against online-only stores and big boxes on price is nothing new, Clark's team is focused on what it can control.

"We're going to deal with them the same way as we have in other years — remain aware, yet focused on what we control and what we do, so we can do it the best," she stated. "The downturn of the economy is the biggest and newest threat facing us, so we all need to come up with creative ways to streamline our operations and inspire growth and success where we can."

Phillips is most concerned with the ATF being weaponized to demonize FFL holders.

"As dealers, we all would say the same thing: Regulatory risk is a major concern. The ATF's 'zero tolerance' stance with little to no rules or direction is really concerning for us all," he said. "Outside of regulatory risk, we'll continue to see the race to the bottom that hurts everyone."

## PERCEIVED VALUE WILL BE KEY

Consumers are expected to have less discretionary income in 2023, which will stunt sales of "extras" like firearm purchases and related accessories.

"A lot of customers are in a holding pattern on extraneous purchases until they see more stability with inflation, rates and other overall market," Hague observed. "Rising costs and expenses are a problem felt by everyone right now."

With less money to go around, budget-friendly products will stand out. According to Ausley, adding value will be a key to securing sales this year.

"Budget-minded items always sell," he said. "However, I see 2023 as a year where the consumer will be looking for more bang for the buck — meaning greater perceived value, like free extras or upgraded features on a current model."

Phillips agreed, but suggested a strong sales team can flip the script.

"I'm sure price will be an issue in some sales," he contended. "But if our sales folks continue to offer good, consultative service to help buyers understand the benefits and features of products, we can offset much of that. People will buy good quality if they know what they are looking at. We just have to make sure to help them understand and acknowledge the difference."



**Price-conscious purchasing by customers goes hand in hand with strategic buying by the retailer. We won't be doing much of 'let's bring this in and experiment to see if it sells' this year."**

**Jacquelyn Clark**, Bristlecone Shooting Training & Retail Center

Clark likewise sees price playing a bigger role in decision-making in 2023.

"Because discretionary dollars are in shorter supply, customers are likely going to spend more time price comparing before a purchase," she said. "If the strategy is to be middle-of-the-pack or slightly higher, the sales team better be ready to communicate the extra value for the higher price, because the customer will know what the shop down the street is selling the item for."

## FINDING SUCCESS IN THE NEW YEAR

When it's all said and done, dealers are going to have to be smart, with a healthy dose of grit and gumption, to make 2023 a successful year.

According to Hague, focusing on the customer is an essential way to start.

"It's going to take a lot of effort from the retailer to find products at a good price, and then deliver those products to the customer along with a great experience," he noted. "Finding creative ways to get customers into your store will be important — special events,

leagues, fundraisers, etc. We all need to focus on the customer, and find ways to make them feel comfortable purchasing from us."

To achieve new-year success, Clark advises dealers to streamline operations and be price-conscious, just like their customers are.

"Price-conscious purchasing by customers goes hand in hand with strategic buying by the retailer. We won't be doing much of 'let's bring this in and experiment to see if it sells' this year," she said.

Phillips predicts a strong membership base will enable retailers to withstand the challenges of a downturn.

"Memberships are the key to surviving (and thriving) in slow markets," he stated. "Members will still buy products and they'll come use the range, thus their benefits. They're invested, so we'll make sure the business model continues to revolve around them. If they understand and feel the value, we'll see the benefits of our service and product offerings."

Laws encouraged dealers to offer something unique, while staying nimble and responsive.

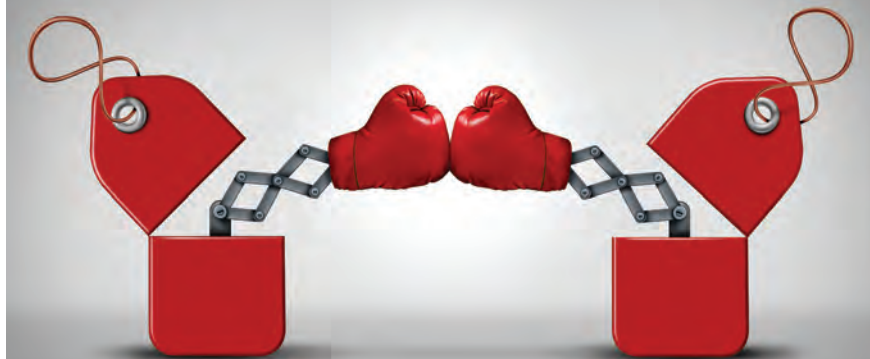
"Look for really cool brands newer to the market, and need a leg up," he said. "Be different. Big entities can't move as quickly as smaller ones so use it to create fun services quickly, then move on if it doesn't resonate. Keep it simple, keep it fun."

Ausley predicts a dealer's resourcefulness will go a long way toward determining whether or not profits are made at the close of the business year.

"To be successful in 2023, dealers will have to keep both eyes open at all times, looking for the lowest cost of goods and making sure the current market price of potential new inventory is actually a profitable venture," he concluded. **SI**

Dealers, the floor is open for discussion — what's it going to take to be successful this year? Where do you see the greatest opportunity for growth in a likely down year for the industry? I'd love to hear from you: [editor@shootingindustry.com](mailto:editor@shootingindustry.com).





BY JADE MOLDAE

# DEALERS PREP FOR PRICING BATTLE

**AT** the NASGW Expo this past October, the question resounding around the exhibition hall among attendees was: “Where do we go from here in 2023?”

NASGW President Kenyon Gleason summarized it well when he observed after the event, “We’re entering in a period of discovery. People are still trying to figure out — or discover — where we’re going from here as there aren’t a lot of strong indicators yet.”

There was hope the results of the 2022 midterm election would provide some clarity, but a mixed bag has further clouded the landscape. However, dealers have already detected some changes in the marketplace — and they don’t exactly herald electrifying news for the industry in 2023.

## NEW-YEAR PREDICTIONS

At the start of 2022, the industry was riding the buoyant wave of momentum from more than 5 million first-time gun buyers joining our ranks in 2021. But as the year progressed, Jacquelyn Clark, co-owner of Bristlecone Shooting, Training & Retail Center in Lakewood, Colo., observed a noticeable slowdown in her store.

“We went in to 2022 optimistic spending would continue much as it did in 2021, with a potentially slight downturn as things continued to

normalize after the pandemic,” she said. “We didn’t anticipate facing a full recession and economic slow down. After the last half of 2022, we’re predicting 2023 will remain the same or decline slightly as consumers’ discretionary dollars continue to be scarce.”

As a result, Clark shared Bristlecone is going to be cautious in 2023.

“We aren’t planning any big capital expenditures or departmental expansions this year,” she said. “We’re going to be conservative with our spending, create operational efficiencies and focus on encouraging repeat business and loyalty with our existing customers.”

One of the benefits of a divided government is President Biden’s anti-gun agenda won’t be fulfilled by the 118th Congress. This will impact sales next year, predicts John Phillips, president and founder of Poway Weapons & Gear, in Poway, Calif.

“I think ’23 will be down 10–15% from 2022. I doubt any legislation will be coming out of Congress — which doesn’t mean there won’t be any proclamations or executive orders from the White House — until the next election,” he said. “So, purchasing out of fear of new gun laws won’t be a driving force for a while.”

It’s not all doom and gloom, according to Alex Hague, co-owner of

Vandalia Range and Armory, with a location in Vandalia, Ohio and New Castle, Ind. He sees some positives from 2022 carrying over into 2023.

“I think 2023 has a lot of potential,” he said. “A lot of customers purchased more firearms and ammunition with the uncertainties of COVID, and so they aren’t as pressed to buy as in years’ past. We also see customers holding off on purchases due the rising costs in their everyday expenses. Hopefully we see inflation relief in 2023, which will help give consumers confidence in their purchases.”

## PRICING BATTLE ON THE WAY?

With a recession looming, the dealers polled for this column expressed fear over the return of “race to the bottom” pricing and its detrimental effects.

“

**I see 2023 as a year where the consumer will be looking for more bang for the buck — meaning greater perceived value, like free extras or upgraded features on a current model.”**

Clay Ausley, Fuquay Gun

“Storefront dealers have threats on every corner, and 2023 is going to be no different,” said Clay Ausley, owner of Fuquay Gun in Fuquay-Varina, N.C. “The biggest threat in 2023 will be other brick-and-mortar stores choking on inventory and willing to lose money to pay the bills. This practice happens nearly every slowdown and hurts the entire industry — it devalues the products we all have and forces most of us to race to the bottom and beyond on price. Race-to-the-bottom pricing will be a storyline for 2023.”

Barry Laws, CEO of Openrange in Crestwood, Ky., is likewise anticipating a pricing battle in 2023.

“I used to firmly believe ‘service trumped price,’ yet I no longer think this

Continued on p. 81



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