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IS THE "BUZZ" BACK?

SHOOTING INDUSTRY[®]

THE INDUSTRY'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE — EST. 1955

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ARE THEY COMING BACK?

*Re-Engaging First-Time
Buyers From "The Surge"*

COMPLIANCE & TECHNOLOGY

Marketing To The
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Image: O.F. Mossberg & Sons Inc.

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A Year Of Opportunity

It's no secret: 2023 is projected to be a "down" year for the industry. ("Down" is a relative term — as the demand surge of 2020 and 2021 wasn't going to last forever.) In this season of reduced sales volume, dealers still have an opportunity to make 2023 a successful year, according to retail guru Hank Yacek.

"Focus your products and services investments into the areas still showing better-than-average performance, while also looking for 'unplowed and fertile soil' that might hold new opportunities for growth after the storm," he advises.

For more insights, see "When Storms Bring Opportunity" **pp. 24–26**.

STORE OWNER LESSONS

Last June, Ava Flanell expanded her business portfolio to include becoming a shareholder of a store with three locations. In this month's *Best Practices* installment, she shares seven things she's learned as a store owner. One of the first was being selective about what you share with employees.

"When giving advice or wanting to make changes, pick a few priority items and go down the list. This won't overwhelm the employees and it provides realistic expectations on your part, instead of expecting everything to change overnight," she suggests.

See **p. 22**.

APPEALING TO FIRST-TIME BUYERS

One of the opportunities afforded to dealers is the millions of first-time gun owners from 2020–2021. Dave Larsen, owner of Doug's Shoot'n Sports in Salt Lake City shares while these first-time buyers haven't become passionate firearms enthusiasts, they're still coming in — and bringing company.

"A lot of those customers are coming back and bringing their friends," Larsen observed. They've all become more aware of their rights and their obligations as gun owners."

For more see **pp. 28–31**.



FEBRUARY 2023

CALLING IN SPRING TURKEY HUNTERS

Marketing to North America's legions of turkey aficionados is all about timing and understanding the customer. Ken Perrotte talks with two successful retailers who share their thoughts on closing the deal with the gobbler getters.

"Consumer demand sees a noticeable uptick in March as those who don't want to be without begin hunting down whatever gear they want for the upcoming season," said Green Top's Brad Stephenson. "Most turkey hunters are like many other hunters out there and there's always a mad rush during the last week before the season begins."

For more customer calling tips, see **pp. 38–41**.

COMING NEXT MONTH: THE WOMAN'S ISSUE!

Shooting Industry's fifth annual Woman's Issue will continue the groundwork laid since 2019's inaugural edition by equipping dealers to expand sales to women. This issue will feature insights from Southwick Associates on what the data says about a woman's firearms purchase journey, why family-focused classes will bring in more women, products for women on the go and more.

Additionally, this issue will explore how dealers can continue to cultivate diversity in their communities as well as exclusive coverage from SHOT Show 2023. **GI**

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SKIN IN THE GAME

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MORE SKIN IN THE GAME MATTERS

I greatly enjoy reading *Shooting Industry* and I've found the "Retail vs. Home-Based Dealer" contributions to be insightful. I'd like to add just a bit by expressing those who have more skin in the game deserve a different level of service from the distributors.

I run a very small shop with a very small shooting range. The success of the shop and shooting range mean much more to me (and the one full-time and two part-time employees who work here) than that of a home-based FFL.

How do I know? Because I've risked my home in order to invest the capital needed to open a retail storefront and a shooting range.

I'm in constant communication with distributors, and I'm told, "Buy more, and we'll give you more." While it may be frustrating to hear that, it's completely understandable. And it's honest ... and fair. If a home-based FFL wants to receive a product (in place of me being able to receive it, and/or to compete with me),

The home-based FFL needs to realize they don't deserve the same level of care because they're simply not as deeply invested as somebody who has risked everything and is also responsible for making payroll to staff.

then the home-based FFL should try risking what I've been willing to risk.

Until then, the home-based FFL needs to realize they don't deserve the same level of care because they're simply not as deeply invested as somebody who has risked everything and is also responsible for making payroll to staff.

— **Darin Reisler, Head Instructor & Founder**
The Tactical Boutique at Plus One Defense Systems
West Hartford, Conn.

Darin, thank you for reading *Shooting Industry*. You've presented a level-headed perspective on such a contentious topic. We firmly believe the storefront dealer represents the backbone of this industry.

More will be explored on this topic throughout the year.

— Jade Moldae, Editor

CONTINUED INVENTORY CHALLENGES

Editor's Note: The following letter is a reaction to "Dealers Prep For Pricing Battle" (*Industry Link*, Jan. 2023).

I would settle for my wholesalers actually having inventory on hand to purchase.

There have been times when I have gone through five or six of my wholesalers and have *not* been able to find what my customers want. This happened quite a few times in 2021 and 2022. And it's not like they were weird or exotic items.

I've had stuff on order for a number of months — and even over a year — and in most of those cases have yet to see those items come available. And this caused my customers to move on. So, I lost business. ❌

— **Michael Winkler, Owner**
Osage Gun Exchange
Weimar, Texas

HAVE A THOUGHT WHILE READING THE ISSUE?

Let us know at comments@shootingindustry.com or facebook.com/shootingindustry.



MENTAL HEALTH: IT'S OK TO TALK ABOUT IT.

Everyone struggles sometimes.
Sometimes we need help.
And that's okay!

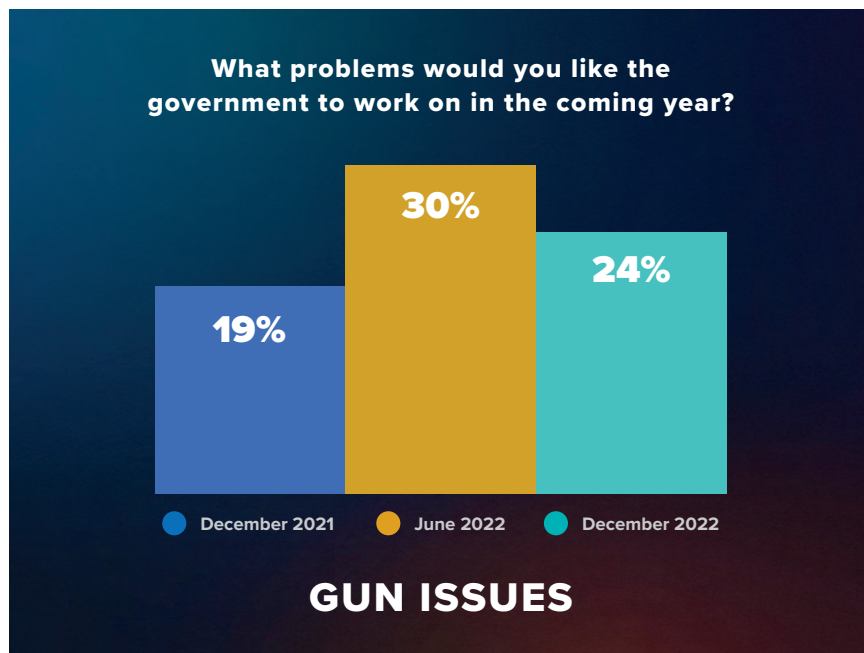
As firearms owners, we often have a tough time admitting when we need help, and that is particularly true with our psychological struggles. One great way to check in on yourself and your mental state is to take a free and anonymous screening.

Walk the Talk America is made up of gun people who want to help other gun people while protecting our rights.

Take a free & anonymous screening
at WTTA.org/LOVE



Follow us @walkthetalkus
Learn more at WTTA.org



Source: AP & NORC ("2023: The Public's Priorities And Expectations")

AP POLL: GUN CONTROL NOT A PRIORITY IN 2023

By Jade Moldae

The number of Americans signaling their support for gun control has waned since last year. A recent poll conducted by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research revealed the importance of "gun issues" has fallen among the public since the height of summer 2022 — around the time Congress passed the Bipartisan Safer

Communities Act.

To preview the public's agenda for 2023, the poll asked 1,124 adults nationwide (Dec. 1–5, 2022) to provide up to five issues they believed should be priorities in the new year. A stronger concentration of respondents cited the economy (31%), inflation (30%), immigration (27%) and climate change

(26%) as greater priorities than "gun issues" (19%). When the poll was last conducted in June 2022, "gun issues" was the second-highest concern listed, noted by 30% of respondents at the time.

It will come as no surprise: these results were heavily swayed by political identification. Firearms was not listed in the top five concerns by either Republicans or independents. While firearms was listed as the second-greatest problem facing the U.S. by 30% of Democrats in the most recent survey, it represents a sizable drop from June 2022 — when firearms was included as the top issue by 45% of Democrat respondents. (For broader context, "gun issues" was listed by 41% of Democrat respondents in Dec. 2021.)

This poll was publicized in early January, just as NSSF announced 2022 as the third-strongest year on record for its adjusted NICS figures — which topped 16.4 million, trailing only 2020 and 2021. The Dec. 2022 NSSF-adjusted NICS figure was 1,747,506, a decrease of 2.5% compared to Dec. 2021 (1,792,797). Q4 2022 tracked 4.9% under Q4 2021 (4,532,341 from 4,763,439).

With a divided Congress and diminished support for gun control among the public, the likelihood of significant anti-gun legislation advancing — at the federal level, at least — looks to be increasingly unlikely in 2023.

[/ apnorc.org](https://apnorc.org) / nssf.org

SMITH & WESSON UPDATES AMERICAN GUARDIANS PROGRAM

Smith & Wesson Brands Inc. has announced a new and improved American Guardians program to more generously reward those who serve and protect. The program offers specially priced firearms for law enforcement, military and first responders through a network of authorized dealers.

"Smith & Wesson values all of the first responders, law enforcement, military and public safety personnel that serve our great nation and the freedom of

its citizens. The American Guardians program is our way of saying 'thank you' to those heroes who serve the greater good of our country," said Matt Fehmel, Smith & Wesson senior director, global professional and international sales.

The refreshed American Guardians initiative features a broader product offering. With every purchase, Smith & Wesson is now including a free pair of its iconic Model 100 nickel-plated handcuffs.

Individuals who may be qualified under this program include: sworn law enforcement, Federal LEO, corrections officers, retired LEO (with "retired" credentials), enforcement academy cadets (with enrolled documentation from the academy), state-licensed



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security companies, federal flight deck officers, court judges, first responders and more. [/ smith-wesson.com/american-guardians](https://smith-wesson.com/american-guardians)

BANKRUPTCY COURT APPROVES PRAIRIEFIRE'S ACQUISITION OF FRONT SIGHT

PrairieFire announced the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Nevada confirmed the Chapter 11 plan of reorganization under which it acquired 100% of the equity of Front Sight Management LLC, changing the name to PrairieFire Nevada.

The plan of reorganization received broad support from Front Sight's creditors and membership. It provides a favorable recovery to every constituency of creditors, and substantial future benefits to former Front Sight members. PrairieFire plans to continue the training and range activities, and to make substantial capital improvements to the 550-acre facility in southern Nevada, all with the expectation of making it the "Home of American Shooting."

"The PrairieFire mission is simple: Create the finest shooting facility in the world, and establish the preeminent shooting destination experience. We will continue to work closely with the former Front Sight members, employees, local residents and Nye County officials in building the home of American shooting sports where members can explore, develop and grow," said Bill Wilson, CEO of PrairieFire Nevada.

PrairieFire's sister company, Stagecoach Outpost LLC, will lead the development of the site's real estate. The destination will include an expansive lifestyle residential and RV community.

"Stagecoach Outpost plans to invest heavily in the location's real estate, lodging and hospitality assets. This site provides the ideal location to develop a community embodying the spirit of the American frontier. The Pahrump Valley is beautiful; it has great weather and it is framed by magnificent mountains on all sides. Our vision is to establish Stagecoach Outpost as



the American community for those who want a bold, adventure-seeking lifestyle," said Todd Reid, Stagecoach Outpost's CEO.

"We are thrilled to welcome PrairieFire as they transform the former Front Sight facility, with significant capital and talent, into a one-of-a-kind, national destination in Nye County and Pahrump. This is a big win for southern Nevada. We expect this to energize the community and provide a tremendous boost to the local economy," said Debra Strickland, Nye County Commissioner for District 5.

PrairieFire's unique training method will cater to everyone, from first-time gun owners to seasoned shooters. It promises thrilling shooting experiences, designed by elite military veterans. / prairiefire.com

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IAIMING ENTERS NORTH AMERICAN MARKET

iAiming, a leader in smart thermal riflescopes and provider of First Shot – Auto Zero technology, announced it is expanding into North America, with office headquarters based in Arlington, Texas.

The expansion will allow iAiming to better serve the needs of existing global clients with a presence in North America, as well as secure new clients and partnerships in the U.S. and Canada in an aggressive effort to become the worldwide leader in smart thermal riflescopes. Tom Weeks has been appointed VP of North American operations for Uniwin Smart Corporation, overseeing all aspects of the iAiming brand.

Initially, iAiming is introducing its three core products: iA-317, iA-617 and iA-612. All of the iAiming smart thermal riflescopes were designed and developed by Australian-based Uniwin Smart PTY LTD and feature a globally patented “First Shot – Auto Zero” feature throughout its entire product line. This feature is designed to provide an effective, automated sight-in process. iAiming’s artificial intelligence utilizes a single scroll knob to access the onboard menu system.



“We will use the new presence in the U.S. to better serve our existing global customers, whilst simultaneously securing new clients and partnerships and strengthening our foothold in the market for smart thermal scope

technology,” Weeks said. “Our rapid growth in Australia, known for rigorous firearm regulations, has quickly enabled us to realize that the potential in North America with its 2A-friendly market is very promising.” / iaiming.com

HORNADY DONATIONS SURPASS \$1 MILLION

Hornady recently donated \$75,237 to the GRACE Cancer Foundation in Grand Island, Neb., with a matching amount going to the American Cancer Society for a total donation of \$150,474 split evenly between the two organizations.

Through this initiative, Hornady has now donated more than \$1 million over the past several years through a joint contribution to the GRACE Cancer Foundation and the American Cancer Society.

“Each year, we are blown away by the generous donation given by Hornady,” said Sarah Koch, executive director of GRACE Cancer Foundation. “Through their generosity, we have been able to provide hope for over 200 patients this year, with over \$209,000 in financial assistance. All

of this would not be possible without their significant support and contribution.”

The donation was calculated using a portion of each box sold of Hornady Critical Defense Lite ammunition in 9mm and .38 Special. Critical Defense Lite features a pink bullet tip and pink ribbon packaging to help showcase the fight against cancer.

“The GRACE Cancer Foundation and American Cancer Society are two organizations we hold very dear to our hearts,” said Renae Waltemath, Hornady director of sales. “Both of these organizations positively impact the lives of cancer patients and their families each and every day; we are honored to support them.”

The GRACE Cancer Foundation assists cancer patients who live within 40 miles of Grand Island, Neb., or are being treated at the Grand Island or Hastings Cancer Centers. Help is available through several



A portion of the proceeds from each Hornady Critical Defense Lite box sold goes to the fight against cancer.

methods, such as gas cards, assistance with medical bills, household expenses and more.

The American Cancer Society’s mission is to free the world from cancer by funding and conducting research, sharing expert information, supporting patients and spreading the word about prevention. / hornady.com

AUTO MAG TO ELEVATE BUSINESS

STRYK Group USA and Angled Spade Technologies have been engaged by Auto Mag Ltd. Co. to take business to the “next level.” Auto Mag has joined the ranks of serious firearms contenders and exists to revitalize the American classic known as the .44 Auto Mag Pistol in a productive business environment.

The original design of Auto Mag’s .44 pistol dates back to 1968 and since then, gun aficionados have been patiently waiting to experience the thrill of owning and shooting this symbol of cinematic, firearm and literary history.

In 2015, Auto Mag answered the call by obtaining exclusive rights to this iconic firearm, namesake and brand. Since then,

Auto Mag has worked tirelessly, spending many years building upon its original design with many improvements along the way.

Under the terms of the agreements, Angled Spade Technologies will provide Auto Mag with the overall management of the company, engineering, new product development, supply chain management, demand sourcing to forecast, website management and systems integration and oversight of sales activities. STRYK Group will manage the sales program and implementation, market positioning and branding and day-to-day customer service support.

“For Auto Mag, this is an exciting time to revitalize and broaden the product offerings and release them to the market. As we’ve worked to ramp up production of the Auto Mag 180-D pistol, we’ve



AUTO MAG RAVEN

recognized that to truly do this project justice, we would need to involve world-class industry leaders from Angled Spade and STRYK Group to effectively meet the current market demands,” said Patrick Henry III of Auto Mag. “Like others in the industry, we’re well acquainted with the standout capabilities and results the teams at these two companies bring to the table.”

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

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LAPUA RELEASES LAPUA HUNT APP

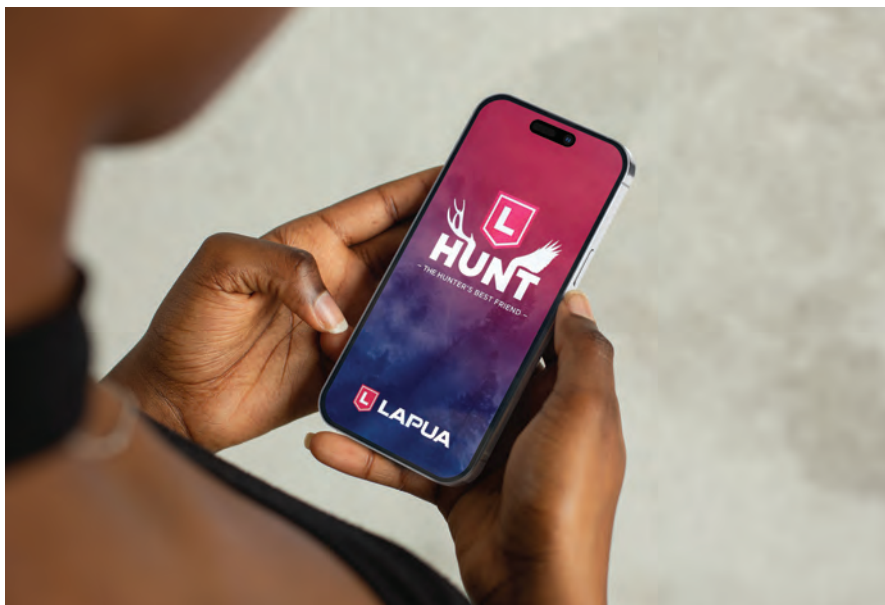
Lapua has announced its new Lapua Hunt app is now available for download in Google Play and the iStore.

Lapua Hunt is the new digital solver for hunters who appreciate ethical hunting, accuracy and safety. Lapua Hunt uses the identical ballistics calculator and product data within the Lapua Ballistics app. Users can add their own rifle and reticle, select the best ammo and game category to achieve hunting success harvesting game of all sizes.

Lapua Hunt's calculator view allows users to determine wind speed and direction, shooting angle and distance. In

addition, hunters can also input weather information (i.e., temperature, air pressure and relative humidity) for further

solving. Additional paid features allow cartography/map view, and the ability to set up a hunting team. / lapua.com



NSSF RELEASES NEW “PARTNER WITH A PAYER” VIDEOS

NSSF has added two new videos to its “Partner with a Payer” resource library highlighting the cooperative efforts of the firearm industry, state wildlife agencies and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to help sustain the nation's natural resources.

Partner with a Payer is an initiative of USFWS. NSSF and industry companies participate in the program to strengthen ties between all excise tax-paying manufacturers — firearms and ammunition, archery equipment, marine and sportfishing equipment — and the state agencies that use these funds to conserve wildlife and habitat. These excise-tax dollars are placed in the federal Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Fund for annual distribution to the states.

The seventh video in the “Partner with a Payer” series features a tour of the Nosler Inc. Ammunition Facility and focuses on the Pacific Northwest Health Laboratories as an example of more than 35 research facilities across the country that monitor the health of all wildlife and develop responses to emerging diseases.

The eighth video in the series focuses on the Federal Premium Ammunition company, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Pittman-Robertson excise taxes that are applied to all sporting arms and ammunition



“Pacific Northwest Health Labs | Partner with a Payer,” the seventh video in the Partner with a Payer series, features a tour of Nosler's ammunition facility and focuses on the Pacific Northwest Health Laboratories, one of more than 35 research facilities in the U.S. that monitor the health of wildlife and develop responses to emerging diseases.

in support of wildlife and habitat conservation.

Since 1937, when the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act was enacted (known as the Pittman-Robertson Act), the manufacturers of firearms, ammunition and archery equipment have paid more than \$15.8 billion on their products for the benefit of wildlife conservation and restoration, hunter education and development of shooting ranges.

NSSF President and CEO Joe Bartozzi said, “It is an incredible model of conservation funding that benefits all Americans, not just hunters and target shooters, and helps ensure sustainable

wildlife and habitat for future generations. Our industry's contributions to this program are something we've long been proud of, and we want the employees of companies and state agencies to be also, which is why we're proud to be involved with the Partner with a Payer program.”

These latest videos and others in the series were produced by Shine United LLC / Kingdom Filmworks for NSSF through a Multistate Conservation Grant awarded by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. / nssf.org/manufacturers/partner-with-payer



THE IMPACT EXPERIENCE LAUNCHES

IMPACT Experience, an event company catering to the shooting sports industry, has launched in partnership with FTW Ranch in Barksdale, Texas. IMPACT events are designed to be a stress-free experience for all levels of hunters preparing for their next adventure, or shooters simply wishing to sharpen their skills with guidance from some of the best instructors in the world.

The IMPACT Experience event is focused on making participants fully understand their rifle/optic, as well as how to make necessary in-field adjustments. Part of the IMPACT Experience is an offering of premier field-tested rifles and optics that are then “fit” to the participants who are guided through FTW’s SAAM Precision class by their instruction staff.

IMPACT Experience events are also keenly targeted to assisting companies within and outside of the hunting and shooting sports industry. Custom IMPACT “experiences” can be implemented to focus on new product launch events, staff training, team building, as well as valuable time with select key accounts and customers.

“Having spent over 30 years in the consumer goods industry, I realized a number of manufacturers did not recognize the value of a proper product launch strategy, impactful staff training or even creative ways of getting additional face time with key accounts and partners,” said Stephen Graham, owner and operator of IMPACT Experience.

FTW Ranch has 12,500 acres, consisting of 32 ranges and over 1,400 targets for instructors to create nearly any scenario for participants.

[/impact-experience.net](http://impact-experience.net)



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ONX ACQUIRES TOPRUT

onX, owner of the GPS app onX Hunt, has acquired Toprut, a draw odds and application tool. By bringing Toprut into its fold, onX Hunt becomes a year-round tool, from pre-season scouting and field use to finding the data needed to navigate tag applications across the west.

Toprut is a core service that helps hunters make insightful, fact-driven tag application decisions each season. Tags in the west have become increasingly difficult to draw in recent years, so in 2021, onX Hunt partnered with Toprut to offer draw application data to its onX Elite members.

Through this partnership, onX Hunt analyzed western elk data from 2018–2022 and discovered the demand for tags in the west was outpacing supply more dramatically than anticipated:

- Resident elk applicants are up +9.28% from 2018 to 2021;
- Non-resident elk applicants are up +22.68% over the past five years;
- Total limited entry bull tags available are down -2.49% from 2018 to 2021.

During application season, onX Elite members can log into Toprut, successfully navigate draw odds, build an application



strategy, find overlooked opportunities and save time and frustration throughout the process.

onX Hunt and Toprut will offer draw odds for 12 western states: Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and now Alaska and Washington (Washington to be released soon). Plans are already underway to expand into additional states throughout 2023.

“A successful hunt all starts with finding the right tag,” said Cliff Cancelosi, onX Hunt general manager. “As demand for tags increases and point creep makes quality units more difficult to draw, hunters need a tool to help them navigate western applications. By bringing Toprut into the onX Hunt ecosystem, we can drive value for those users and continue to innovate as the leader in hunt tools and resources.”

onX will continue working with Toprut’s network of contributors, administrators, and the company’s Co-Founder Steve Cordle. [/toprut.com](http://toprut.com)

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CAA USA OPENS NEW FACILITY, RETAIL STORE

CAA USA unveiled a brand-new facility and opened the doors to its first retail store for walk-in customers.

During the December 2022 grand opening, visitors had the opportunity to purchase any of the American-made CAA Micro Conversion Kits (MCK), including the new GEN3 Conversion Kit, or any other CAA USA product for 50% off.

For customers wanting to learn a bit more about the MCK and the new GEN3, two Shooting Tips & Tour sessions were offered during the grand opening. Founder and CEO, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Mikey Hartman also gave a special shooting tip class. Hartman, a former IDF officer, is credited with developing the IDF sharpshooting manual, as well as leading the Sharpshooting and Marksmanship School.

"This is a very special day for all of us at CAA USA," Hartman explained. "We have been working for months behind the



CAA USA's new facility and first retail store is located in Pompano Beach, Fla.

scenes to make the grand opening of our very first retail store something special

and memorable for our customers."
[/ caagearup.com](https://caagearup.com)

SPEER, CCI AMMUNITION TO PRODUCE CATALYST LEAD-FREE PRIMERS

Speer and CCI Ammunition announce the implementation and production of market-leading Catalyst lead-free priming technology in their Lewiston, Idaho facility. The proprietary Catalyst primer was initially developed by Speer and CCI's partner company, Federal Ammunition, starting in 2016.


"We're extremely proud of this new production capability which continues the rollout of an incredible primer technology," said Jason Vanderbrink, Federal, CCI and Speer president. "This product has proven to be the best in its class after nearly seven years of

continuous production. Its consistent performance has been tested over hundreds of millions of rounds. Most notably, the product is featured in Federal's innovative Syntech Range ammo and American Eagle Lead-Free."

According to Federal Ammunition, the Catalyst primer creates more uniform and complete propellant combustion, yielding minimal velocity variation and consistent bullet launch for improved accuracy. It is also non-hydrophilic, so it does not attract water molecules like DDNP-based mixes found in most lead-free primers, resulting in better reliability.

"Catalyst lead-free priming technology provides the cleanest, most consistent ignition possible. We are excited that our Lewiston plant is now set up to run Catalyst priming in our target pistol products," said Mike Overberg, Speer



and CCI director of factory operations. "The Anoka facility has proven this to be the best lead-free priming technology available. Our staff here has done a fantastic job of working across factories to extend this product into Speer and CCI Blazer ammunition products made in Lewiston, Idaho." 

[/ speer.com](https://speer.com) / cci-ammunition.com

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E. MCNAMARA

1791 Outdoor Lifestyle Group Names Sales & Marketing VP

1791 Outdoor Lifestyle Group welcomed Evan McNamara as VP of sales and marketing where he is responsible for all related activities including management of both teams.

Ramiro Romani, CEO of 1791 Outdoor Lifestyle Group, said, "I'm confident Evan will utilize his experience and leadership to help grow our great brands as we look forward to our next stage of growth."

McNamara is a U.S. Army veteran whose service includes a deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005. He was a management consultant before joining the outdoor industry and most recently worked at Vista Outdoor.



D. RODRIGUEZ

Streamlight Inc. Selects Regional Sales Manager

Streamlight Inc. announced the appointment of Daniel

Rodriguez as regional sales manager — Latin America for the company's International Division. Rodriguez will be responsible for sales development of products in Latin American markets, as well as overseeing independent sales agencies to generate product sales.

Streamlight Chief Revenue Officer Michael F. Dineen said, "[Rodriguez's] knowledge of international markets will no doubt further enhance Streamlight's presence in Latin America."

Prior to his new role, Rodriguez served as area manager — Latin America and Caribbean for Dorian Drake International, and also worked as the commercial director for

EYMAQ Inc.

He earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Simon Bolivar University, Caracas, Venezuela.



L. NICHOLS

Orchid Adds Business Dev. Chief

With nearly 40 years of executive-level experience at public and private firearm manufacturing companies, Leland Nichols joined Orchid as its new chief of strategy and business development.

Orchid CEO Jon Rydberg said, "[Nichols'] industry experience will play a key role in refining Orchid's go-to-market strategy while also offering our clients insight to achieve consistent growth."

Prior to joining the firearms industry, Nichols served in executive roles at Black & Decker, Stanley Hardware, Kohler Company and Rinnai America.



J. DAVIDSON

Creedmoor Sports Expands Marketing Team

Jonathan Davidson joined Creedmoor Sports to expand the company's marketing capabilities. He will be focused on driving consumer engagement through integrated marketing campaigns supported by rich, engaging content delivered through all D2C communication platforms.

"[Davidson] brings a wealth of experience and has an incredible work ethic and positive demeanor that always creates energy and forward movement," said Wayne Dayberry, director of marketing for Creedmoor Sports.

Davidson has broad marketing experience in the shooting sports industry, including executing product

launches and managing large-scale content generation projects.



T. SMART

Hydra Weaponry Welcomes Sales Executive

Sales executive Tanner Smart has joined Hydra Weaponry to spearhead its growing distribution channel. He is working with current customers and is seeking new partnerships for the company.

Hydra Weaponry CEO Mack Gwinn shared, "[Smart] has extensive knowledge from the retailer side of the business, as well as from the firearm manufacturer sales side."

A U.S. Army veteran, Smart previously worked in sales with Stag Arms and spent nearly a decade as the sales manager and firearms instructor at Guns Plus, a North Carolina firearms retailer and shooting facility.



P. BROWNELL

Brownells/2nd Adventure Group Name Chairman/CEO

Pete Brownell, owner of 2nd Adventure Group Holding Company, is returning to serve as CEO of the organization, which includes Brownells, Crow Shooting Supply and AR15.com. Brownell will serve as 2nd Adventure Group's chairman of the board and will also serve as CEO of its brands.

"I'm excited to work alongside our employees to find out how we can inspire, educate and outfit our customers to enjoy a lifetime of adventure," he remarked.

Brownell is no stranger to the role of CEO, having previously overseen Brownells and Crow Shooting Supply from 2012–2018. In 2018, Brownell became co-chairman with his father, Frank Brownell. [S](#)

BY MASSAD AYOUB

SELF-DEFENSE MYTH BUSTING

Last month in this space we laid out the basic legal formula for the justifiable use of lethal force, focusing on the foundational elements of Ability, Opportunity and Jeopardy. This month, let's look at some of the more prevalent myths and misconceptions about this topic you might have to clear up for customers — especially those who have recently joined our ranks.

FELONY STUPID

Perhaps the most common bad advice is, “If you shoot the bad guy on the porch, drag him inside and put a kitchen knife in his dead hand before you call the police.”

Any customer who expresses such a thing needs a talking-to. Tell him what he'll be letting himself in for.

First, his subterfuge will almost certainly be discovered. Even if the customer lives in “Mayberry RFD,” it won't be bumbling Deputy Barney Fife doing the investigation: It will be experienced homicide investigators from the county sheriff's office or perhaps the state police, with access to multi-million-dollar crime labs and highly skilled crime scene technicians. Skin cells, body hairs, micro-fibers, DNA and bloodstains that escaped the naked eye of the person who altered the crime scene will all be discovered.

The person who followed this terrible advice is now *prima facie* guilty of Alteration of Evidence, a crime in and of itself. It will be easy for the prosecutor to convince a grand jury to indict for manslaughter since most people associate this sort of behavior with someone who panicked and shot the wrong person and is trying to cover it up.

Perjury, also a felony in and of itself, is clearly implied in this advice. Even an indictment for premeditated murder is on the table, under the legal principle that subsequent alteration of evidence can be construed as an indication of prior planning of a crime.

Indeed, the giving of the advice is construable as a crime in and of itself: Subornation of perjury, that is, exhorting or advising someone to lie under oath. Where I come from, it's a Class 4 felony. If the giving of the advice is construable as a felony, isn't it the very definition of “felony stupid”?

“FLIGHT EQUALS GUILT” & MORE

How many times have we all heard someone suggest, “If you have to shoot someone in self-defense, just look around for witnesses and if you don't see any, leave; that will save you all the legal hassle.”

Such action triggers “flight equals guilt” — a presumption both the

◀ While your self-defense customers are arming themselves with products from your store, take the opportunity to “arm” them with common sense before they're ever involved in an active self- or home-defense situation. (Image: Daniel Defense)

prosecution in a criminal case and the plaintiff's lawyer in a civil case will be allowed to argue to a jury. Any juror who reads the Bible will likely flash to Proverbs 28:1, “The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.” It's a whole lot easier to exonerate a “righteous lion” than “the wicked.”

I remind my students who've heard this garbage that the prisons are full of people who looked all around for witnesses and didn't see any until they appeared to testify against them at trial. And let's not forget — surveillance cameras are everywhere today.

The person who flees the scene has a very uphill fight in court ahead of them. The best advice is for the customer involved in such a thing to immediately get to the phone and call it in. This will generally get that person listed as the “victim/complainant,” which is a whole lot better starting point for the investigation than “the suspect a witness says shot someone.”



Perhaps the most common bad advice is, 'If you shoot the bad guy on the porch, drag him inside and put a kitchen knife in his dead hand before you call the police.'

What if the incident occurs on a remote hiking path somewhere far from cell phone towers? The customer should still dial 911. If nothing else, the phone will record — to the second — the time the customer *did* attempt to call the police and emergency medical service — the act of a concerned citizen and survivor, as opposed to a criminal perpetrator. If in a rural area where the customer *must* leave the scene to seek help, they should set their GPS for the nearest police station. If the customer is intercepted by police on the way, the GPS

will show they were, in fact, en route to the police station to report ... again, an act associated with innocence rather than guilt.

... AND STILL MORE BAD ADVICE

Finally, there's, "If you have to shoot a bad guy, make sure he's dead so he can't lie about what happened." Good Lord, do the people who give this terrible advice ever *think*? Let's say a solid hit dropped the bad guy in place, and he dropped his gun. He's down and out of the fight, apologizing and begging you not to shoot him anymore. Is any moral person ever going to say, "Well, dude, I'd like to let you live, but I've heard people like you lie about people like me, so ..." BANG!

Anyone who can do that isn't one of us good guys or gals anymore.

Need an example? Google "Jerome Erslund, Oklahoma City." He was the pharmacist who reacted to a couple of teenage holdup men by drawing and firing his Taurus Judge .410/.45

revolver, hitting one of them in the head with a single buckshot pellet. That one fell, and the other fled. Erslund chased the second robber down the street, firing as he went, and sending bystanders ducking from the wildly fired pellets that never did hit their target. Returning to the pharmacy with his empty revolver, he saw the first young perpetrator lying supine and motionless on the floor, set down his empty Taurus and picked up a loaded KelTec P3AT. He then walked over to the prostrate teen and pumped



'If you have to shoot a bad guy, make sure he's dead so he can't lie about what happened.' Good Lord, do the people who give this terrible advice ever think?

a few .380 bullets into his torso, with fatal results.

I spoke with the prosecutor who convicted him of murder. He had no problem with the first shot. He felt — and convinced a jury — the fatal, finishing shots were based on malice, not necessity. Mr. Erslund is now a long-term resident of the Oklahoma State Penitentiary.

There are, of course, still more myths. Those of us in the industry have an ethical duty to expose them and warn our customers about them. Next month, we'll finish the series with some more of the common myths and misunderstandings to be aware of and to be dispelled. **S!**

Editor's Note: To read the first article of this series, visit shootingindustry.com/discover/explaining-deadly-force-the-foundational-elements. Have feedback to share? Drop us a line: comments@shootingindustry.com.

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BY ASHLEY MCGEE

5 MUST-HAVE PRODUCTS FOR WOMEN IN 2023

Alongside minority gun owners, women continue to be one of the fastest-growing demographics in the firearms industry. In 2020 and 2021, more than 5 million women bought a gun for the first time — equating to 37% of the 13.8 million new gun owners identified over that time period.

Unfortunately, however, at gun stores all throughout the country, far too many women still have a difficult time finding products that work well for their needs and lifestyle. If your goal is to better serve your existing female customer base and/or increase your reach with this growing segment of gun owners, consider adding these must-have products to your inventory.

1. WALTHER PDP F-SERIES

Released April of last year, the 9mm Walther PDP F-Series offers solutions to many of the challenges women face with other firearms that may be marketed toward them but weren't actually engineered for them, including reduced trigger reach, reduced grip circumference and reduced force necessary to operate the slide.

Although the PDP F-Series was developed with the help of a group of highly skilled and talented female shooters and instructors, Vincent Mann, Walther Arms' senior digital marketing specialist, said "It's a gender-neutral

tool. If a tool fits your hand ... it fits your hand. If it doesn't, it doesn't."

"I had been carrying the 4" PDP Compact for well over a year prior to the release of the F-Series," said Mann. "I had a chance to shoot the F-Series quite a bit and I actually shoot it better than my PDP, so I bought the 3.5" and it's my EDC now."

2. PHLSTER ENIGMA

When asked what products have been the most popular with her female clients, Avery "Skip" Skipalis, owner of Skip's Tactical Training, immediately responded with the Phlster Enigma.

"I don't want it to sound like I'm exaggerating, but for me, it's been revolutionary," she said. "It takes away needing a belt or an utclip and is actually one-size-fits-all."

Skipalis has been a military firearms instructor for over 10 years, an NRA instructor for five years and a certified GLOCK Advanced Armorer since 2015. One of the things she stresses to those she teaches is if your goal is to carry every day, then you need to fit it into your lifestyle, not the other way around. Otherwise, you'll always find an excuse not to carry.

The Enigma from Phlster is a high-performance concealment system worn independently of the wearer's clothing, allowing her to fine-tune concealed carry in ways that aren't possible with

◀ Avery "Skip" Skipalis hopes to see more off-body carry options for women in 2023 — as well as greater representation in how the industry markets itself.

conventional belts or bellybands — meaning she can wear whatever she wants over the top. Its 12-way adjustable system allows the user to customize the fit for her unique body shape, making the gun hug close to her body.

Although not exclusively made for or marketed to women, the Enigma is an innovative solution to what Skipalis sees as one of the areas she'd like improved within the 2A community.

"We're seeing more and more products that are 'female cut,' but how does one define what the standard 'female cut' should be?" she said. "People come in all shapes and sizes and carry their weight differently, not just women. What I'd like to see is more variation in materials and textiles to develop more affordable, size-inclusive options."



While evaluating whether your store or range's inventory meets the needs of female consumers should be a priority, it's important to think about the bigger picture.

3. DSG OUTERWEAR HUNTING APPAREL

For female hunters, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more inclusive brand than DSG Outerwear. The brand recently introduced several new apparel items, including the Breanna 2.0 Fleece Pullover and Drop Seat Bibs.

Like the rest of the DSG Outerwear apparel line, both the Breanna 2.0 Fleece Pullover and the Breanna 2.0 Drop Seat Bib are made for women of all sizes and shapes. The Drop Seat Bib incorporates an adjustable snap inseam (from 28.5" to 32.5"), a drop seat feature allowing for easy access when nature calls, a large, zippered thigh pocket and an easy-to-adjust suspender system to ensure the perfect length.

Both the Breanna 2.0 Fleece Pullover and Drop Seat Bib are available in the popular Realtree Edge or Realtree Escape camouflage patterns, as well as

black. Together, they're the ultimate mid-season apparel set for women.

DSG also released an update to its bestselling Bexley line. Made with warmer climates in mind, the new Bexley 3.0 Ripstop Tech Shirt and Pant are perfect for early-season hunting when summer temps are still blazing and staying cool is vital to success in the field.

Comfortably worn in temps 55 degrees and above, the Bexley 3.0 Ripstop Tech Shirt and Pant are made from breathable, Ripstop fabric that's been DWR-treated to help shed water off the surface and allow for moisture to wick away. The shirt features a hood with soft elastic binding to keep the head covered, while comfort-length sleeves with thumbholes give wearers extra protection from the elements.

Like the Drop Seat Bib, the Bexley 3.0 Ripstop Tech Pant incorporates an adjustable inseam (33" to 29.5") along with an elastic waistband for added stretch. Jeans-style pockets can be found in the front, plus a roomy back pocket provides even more convenient storage.



ETS C.A.M. LOADER

The Breanna 2.0 Fleece Pullover, Breanna 2.0 Drop Seat Bib and Bexley 3.0 Ripstop Tech Shirt and Pant are available in sizes XXS–5XL.

4. ETS SPEEDLOADER

Other products that have been game changers for Avery Skipalis and the clients she serves are speedloaders from Elite Tactical Systems (ETS).

"I'm not even sure why, but I resisted using a speedloader for a long time before realizing there's nothing wrong with wanting to work smarter, not harder," she said. "Becoming a

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proficient shooter requires a lot of hand strength, so why expend any more energy than you have to while reloading? Using speedloaders helps conserve your hand strength and maximize your time on the range."

For Skipalis, who's had people travel to Florida from as far as California, Delaware and Texas to take a course with her, the more effectively they can reload their magazines, the more time they can spend actually learning and improving their skills.

ETS currently offers four speedloaders — the C.A.M. Universal Loader for Rifles and the C.A.M. Loader for pistols, available in either 9mm/.40 caliber, .45 caliber or .380 caliber.

5. GTM ORIGINAL "INSTRUCTOR PRELOVED BAG PROGRAM"

As for what she's hoping to see more of in 2023, Skipalis said more off-body carry options.

"People have very strong opinions about off-body carry, but personally, I'd rather off-body carry than not carry at all," she said. "As a community, I think we could do a better job of not shaming people for their choices. We each have different experiences, abilities and preferences, and are at different parts in our concealed carry journey."

Based on analytics from The Well Armed Woman (2021 Blog) and Shoot Like A Girl (2021 Annual Report),

concealed carry bags and purses are now preferred over on-body holsters, especially with new shooters.

Through GTM Original's "Instructor PreLOved Bag Program," certified firearms instructors across the country can order up to three PreLOved bags to use in their training courses, to aide in teaching how to carry firearms off-body.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

While evaluating whether your store or range's inventory meets the needs of female consumers should be a priority, it's important to think about the bigger picture.

"I don't look like the typical instructor or fit the stereotype of what people assume the female gun owner looks like, but when I started leaning into the 2A lifestyle, I was more welcomed than I thought I would be," said Skipalis. "Even still, I don't often see myself represented in retailer or manufacturer marketing materials. And in a world where our community needs as many allies as we can get, it's something that will have to change." **SI**

For more info:
dsgouterwear.com
etsgroup.us
gtmoriginal.com
phlsterholsters.com
waltherarms.com

BEST PRACTICES



BY AVA FLANELL

7 THINGS I'VE LEARNED AS A NEW STORE OWNER

With any successful business, you must constantly evolve to stay relevant, but even the most innovative strategies might not be enough to take your business to the next level. After nine years, my firearms training company eventually hit a roadblock. I needed to expand, but didn't want to take on millions of dollars in debt to build a facility.

So in June 2022, I decided to join forces with DCF Guns, which has three locations in Colorado; one store in Castle Rock and two in Colorado Springs. Each location has a retail component — two are SIG Elite Dealers — and there are five indoor ranges total (including a 100-yard range). All locations offer training and gunsmithing services. I became a shareholder of the company, as well as a salaried employee to teach classes at the facilities.

Being on both sides, as a partner and an employee, has given me a unique perspective. I've realized more than anything how important employees are to the success of a business, especially when you continue to expand and become reliant on their help. The relationships between ownership, upper management and employees are also crucial for any company's success, small or large.

Here are seven things I've concluded in the short six months of working

with DCF Guns that can be applied to majority of stores in our industry. Keep in mind, I've made these conclusions based on what I've seen done well, or perhaps what I might have done differently. Either way, every company could benefit from these tips.

1. BE SELECTIVE IN WHAT YOU ASK FOR.

I've been in the firearms industry for about 10 years and know the Colorado Springs market better than most. So of course, I wanted to share everything I knew — what worked well and what resulted in failure. I quickly learned to take a step back. Everyone was already focused on a task, and I just continued to throw more ideas out there which caused confusion or added to their workload.

When giving advice or wanting to make changes, pick a few priority items and go down the list. This won't overwhelm employees, and it establishes realistic expectations on your part, instead of expecting everything to change overnight.

2. COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY.

Communication is a lost art, but it's crucial to a healthy relationship — whether it is at home, work or even when you're out and about living your life. First, you must be able to convey exactly what you want and expect. If you ask an employee to do something,

◀ Flanell has used her experience as an instructor interacting with students to help communicate with employees as an owner.

be sure you explain it well enough you're both on the same page. You might even go as far as to ask the employee to explain to you what you just asked them to confirm your mutual understanding.

Additionally, if any issues arise, be sure to tackle them immediately. It's easier said than done and requires a lot more work on your part, but if an employee complains about something, it's best to address it right away before it breeds negativity elsewhere. Negativity is like dominoes; it can take out your entire team.

3. SET EXPECTATIONS.

Next, you must have realistic expectations of your employees. Early on, I realized I couldn't expect everyone to treat the company like it's their own and be as passionate about the company or industry as I am. This is a harsh reality for business owners, but for many employees, this is "just a job" for them. When they walk out of the door at the end of the day, they don't (and shouldn't) have to take work home with them. It's an upside to not owning your own business.

In the end, the best we can hope for is they enjoy their job, take pride in their work and have our best interest in mind as they go about their day. If you have an employee who treats the company like it's their own, don't take it for granted and make sure you treat them well. Good help, more than ever, is hard to find. If an employee is managing to do the work of multiple people, give them a pay raise.

4. BE A RESPECTED, BUT WELL-LIKED LEADER.

I've struggled with the balance of being a friend, but also being a boss. I don't have the authority to fire anyone and my percentage of the company is minuscule, but if I see something wrong, I need to speak up or correct it. This puts me in an awkward position. I want employees to feel comfortable around me and treat me like one of their own, but not so comfortable their performance lacks in my presence.

Being successful at managing others is a craft all its own. Many of us might think it's an easy task, but finding that balance is difficult. I'm still navigating how to do this. What I've learned is if you

want people to take you seriously and respect you, you also need to get to know your employees and build a solid relationship with them. This creates a bond so employees will be open about things going on in the workplace, they'll look out for your best interest because they care about the person or people behind the company and it produces a less stressful work environment.

5. ENCOURAGE MORE AND CRITICIZE LESS.

It's easy to fixate on what someone didn't do or the mistakes they make, but there needs to be a balance between constructive criticism and compliments to ensure employees remain productive. In our society, we get so caught up in negativity we forget to spread positivity. We also tend to compliment others more in our head than we do vocally. Let your employees know their hard work isn't going unnoticed. Positive affirmations encourage employees to go the extra

mile, especially when you throw in added benefits such as commission, bonuses or even a gift card.



Being successful at managing others is a craft all its own. Many of us might think it's an easy task.

6. CREATE A BOND BETWEEN THE STAFF.

We've been raised to think work and pleasure shouldn't mix, and while I stand by this to a degree, there's something to be said about having employee appreciation events. Taking the staff out to enjoy something as

simple as pizza and beer allows the staff to get to know each other better and bond, not in a work setting.

Encouraging friendships between the staff means they'll help each other out when needed. If an employee can't make it to work, another employee will be more inclined to have their back and fill the spot or pick up the slack at work with a smaller staff.

7. MAKE TOUGH DECISIONS.

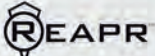
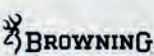
Lastly, be willing to trim the fat. Sometimes you build a relationship with an employee so well you feel bad about letting them go. Understand we all have bad days or moments in our lives where we might be distracted and less productive, but if an employee continues to slack off, you need to fire them.

Having a solid team is a major component in what will set you apart from every other gun store or range. Just make sure you never burn bridges and you're kind about letting them go when the time comes. **SI**

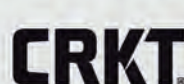
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A man in a dark suit stands with his hands on his hips, looking out over a turbulent, dark sea under a heavy, grey sky. He is perched on a jagged, dark rock that rises from the churning water. The overall mood is one of resilience and contemplation in the face of adversity.

BY HANK YACEK

WHEN STORMS BRING OPPORTUNITY

NAVIGATING REDUCED SALES, NARROWING PROFIT MARGINS & INCREASED PAYROLL

After a powerful storm passes through, you'll hear stories of beachgoers stumbling upon many an item on the

beach. These items range from dangerous grenade simulators to rare and valuable coins. There's a business application here: After a storm, there's always an opportunity to discover something you weren't expecting — be it dangerous or rewarding. Always be looking, you never know just what you might stumble upon!

Quite similarly, the firearm industry is amid what some might call a “perfect storm” of three rather impactful trends — reduced sales volume,

narrowing profit margins and increasing payroll expenses. None of these build confidence for fair winds in the future. Let's put our finger to the wind and gauge how each of these factors could impact a retail business individually.

A DIFFERENT TAKE ON DECREASED SALES

Retail gurus estimate retail in 2023 is expected to see a decline in sales volume of 10%–12% year-over-year. With the COVID surge now well

in our rearview mirror, our industry may see reductions in sales volume going further into the negative than what's being predicted. Seeing this in print looks like a very dark cloud on the horizon!

Let's use a metaphor to get some perspective. The same dark storm cloud spelling disaster for your weekend barbeque might also be a godsend for a farmer seeing the end to a drought. How you see a reduction in sales volume is all a matter of perspective.



Image: freshidea / Adobe Stock

Let's broaden our view a bit and see where the silver lining here might be. Firstly, when I hear a reduction in sales volume the first question I want to ask is "Is this compartmentalized to a particular segment of my business?"

If in fact most of this sales reduction falls into a few categories, there is the potential to limit the negative impacts. I can work with this, and inventory less of these declining categories while looking for an opportunity

to improve sales in other areas and lessen the negative impacts of a slow market.

Focus your products and services investments into the areas still showing better-than-average performance while also looking for "unplowed and fertile soil" that might hold new opportunities for growth after the storm. When you focus on having a more streamlined and efficient product offering, it may just free up a significant amount of cash and let you invest in ways to diversify your business that will generate the needed revenue to outcompete other retailers in your market space.

SELLING ON SERVICE IS THE KEY FACTOR IN WEATHERING THE FLOOD!

NARROWING MARGINS & FLOOD WATERS

Narrowing profit margins can often feel like the coming flood during the storm, and you see the water rising and feel powerless to change it. In surveying online pricing, it's clear the industry is trending toward pre-COVID profit margins on the products they sell. This is a strong indicator

showing retailers view low prices as the centerpiece of their sales strategy. The key here, like any flood, is preparedness.

Preparedness hinges on having the proper tools and training to be ready for any contingency. In the case of narrowing margins, the first piece of preparedness is to clearly know exactly how much profit margin your operation must generate to be able to pay all the bills. This is a non-negotiable facet of every business unless you, the investor(s), are okay with injecting personal funds into the business to keep it on life support.

The second, critical part of preparedness is to train your staff to lean on other aspects of your business to close the sale that have nothing to do with price. In all my years of running my retail shop, we never prided ourselves on having the lowest prices in our market. (It was a very price-competitive market.) With three other local gun shops, two indoor ranges, one large online discounter and five large big-box retailers all within a 20-minute drive of my location there was a lot of price pressure, yet we never bent nor even "price matched" the competition. Why? Because we knew how much margin we needed to make on our products to keep the doors open.

We trained our team to focus on the other aspects of customer service that made customers want to do business with us regardless of price. Selling on service is the key factor

in weathering the flood! In lean times training staff often goes by the wayside, but you may want to instead double down your efforts and be the best shop in town not because of what you sell but because of who you are as a business.

TRAIN YOUR STAFF TO CLOSE THE SALE BY LEANING ON OTHER ASPECTS OF YOUR BUSINESS THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH PRICE.

Your job here is not to just take customers away from other gun shops in town, but to convince people to spend in our industry instead of other forms of recreational spending. Remember, customers only need to perceive your store to be

10% better than the competition to get your unfair share of the local market.

INCREASING PAYROLL EXPENSES

Not too long ago, the media was all abuzz about “increasing minimum wage to \$15 an hour,” yet here we sit with many (if not most of us) paying at least this much — if not significantly more to hire and retain quality employees. (That is, if we can even find them in the first place.)

**“THE REAL
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Managing your human resources from a productivity and staffing level has never been more imperative for success. This requires the management team to be far more forward-looking than ever before. Knowing just how much your payroll expenses impact profitability can be a very simple yet effective

way of measuring the changing winds during this storm.

Simply put, take your “all-in” payroll expenses for a period and divide it by the total revenue your business generated for the same period. Express this calculation as a percentage and you will have what we will call your “Payroll as a Percentage of Gross Revenues (PPGR).” Once you have this number in hand you can quickly and easily see how PPGR impacts profits.

For example, if a store averages a 25% profit margin across all of their goods and services and their PPGR is 20%, you can just simply subtract 20% PPGR from 25% profit margin and see you have five points of profit margin left to pay all the other bills. Add in another 2% for credit card fees and you are now down to three points. It doesn’t leave a lot of wiggle room now does it? In what ways can we manage this better?

The first facet we can approach is productivity. If the same number of salespeople working the same number of hours can sell more products and services, then the PPGR will go down. By being relentless with our teams about salesmanship excellence, we can push each team member’s productivity up significantly.

Next up is staffing levels. It’s all too easy to cry “all hands on deck” when the storm arrives,

but an inefficient and chaotic deck can be worse than fewer, better trained and more efficient team members manning the sails. This is where sales volume forecasting plays an important role. Those reading this article and who work through a POS system could easily look at historical sales volumes for the same period in the prior year. Using current market conditions, they could predict the potential sales volume their store will see in the next days and weeks, then staff the store accordingly to keep the payroll overhead manageable and appropriate for the needs of the business.

Overstaffing in these conditions, in my experience working with clients, is the most common mistake made yet the easiest to correct. It forces me to mention, however, there’s no path to profitability purely through a reduction in the workforce.

Managing the team is a blended art and science of not only managing the number of hours worked but also staffing the facility with truly productive staff. When you can balance your team to have enough staff on hand to maintain good customer service, able to handle the sales volume in a profitable way and do it all from a predictive mindset, a store can weather through most any storm and come out the other side a stronger and more confident team.

The real opportunity here is for the facilities that hone their skills, plan and have contingencies in place for unforeseen circumstances. They will be the ones who come through the storm with the wind at their back and inherit the customers and business volume shed off by the unfortunate businesses that closed because they did not prepare. We can all feel the winds of change around us. Now is the time to set your course for success! **SI**

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By Tim Barker

ARE THEY COMING BACK?

Image: Nomad_Soul / Adobe Stock

Re-Engaging First-Time Buyers From “The Surge”

It's well established the events of 2020 and 2021 propelled an unprecedented

number of novice firearm shoppers through the doors of gun stores across the nation.

In 2021 alone, it's estimated nearly 5.5 million newbies snapped up their first firearm.

Two years later, there are a number of lingering issues surrounding these first-timers. Perhaps none is bigger than the simple question: Are they coming back?

It's not necessarily an easy question to answer when you're managing a



gun store. You and your employees see hundreds or thousands of faces any given week. Certainly, you recognize regulars, but remembering who first showed up during a time of chaos is difficult, at best.

Dave Larsen, owner of Doug's Shoot'n Sports in Salt Lake City, certainly recalls the flood of buyers shaken by

civil unrest and calls to defund the police. It was a wake-up call, he said, that forced people to consider how they would protect themselves and their families. He can't put a number on it, but he knows many of them have come back.

"A lot of those customers are coming back and bringing their friends," Larsen observed. "I don't know whether most of them have become major gun enthusiasts, but they've all become more aware of their rights and their obligations as gun owners."

Of course, there's no way to guarantee any of these newbies — many of them previously anti-gun — will become repeat customers, but there are ways your store can encourage them. Let's look at a few.

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Jillian Biltz is co-owner of Mad Dog Armory, with locations in Tampa and Largo, Fla. She estimates at least half of her new customers from the past couple of years have come back at least once.

Among the keys, she contends, is helping the newbies embrace their purchases. There's been a worry among many in the industry that most of these guns were taken home and tossed in a bedside nightstand — never to be touched again. Considering many of these guns were purchased during COVID

— when many ranges were shut down — it's fair to wonder how many of these customers even know how to use their guns.

"Now it's just sitting there, and they didn't do anything with it," Biltz suggested. "They're still scared of it."

To counter this, Mad Dog Armory has long-stressed training and education for customers, particularly the ones who are new to gun ownership. They offer beginner's classes with an introduction for those starting at zero.

"Some of these people have never even taken their gun out of the box," she said. "And really, they are great customers because they have no bad habits."

From there, customers can move on to more advanced classes, and private

instruction, as they learn more. But it's important, she argued, to make sure students are in the right class.

"You don't want someone who has experience to sit in a class with someone who needs 10 minutes to load a magazine," she warned. "It's just frustrating for other people in the class if they're not on the same level."

Now with business closer to "normal," the shop is striving to get more of its first-time customers — including those who missed out during the COVID shutdowns — into classes and monthly shooting clubs sponsored by the store. The latter offers a chance for new shooters to socialize with more experienced shooters and to be introduced to a wide range of shooting topics.



"Some of these people have never even taken their gun out of the box. And really, they are great customers because they have no bad habits."

JILLIAN BILTZ, Co-Owner
Mad Dog Armory • Tampa, Fla.



Now with business closer to “normal,” the shop is striving to get more of its first-time customers — including those who missed out during the COVID shutdowns — into classes and monthly shooting clubs sponsored by the store.

At Doug's Shoot'n Sports, Larsen also sees training and education as key to ensuring customers will enjoy what they're doing and keep coming back.

To make the point, he tells the story of buying his son a guitar for Christmas a few years ago. He ended up with a nice instrument, but limited knowledge about what to do with it.

“My son knew how to pull it out of the case, plug it in and make some noise. He learned a couple chords, but he didn't know how to play it,” Larsen said. “And that's where most people stop with their guns.”

The right instruction, Larsen argued, can change the entire experience for the shooter. This emphasis forms the foundation of Doug's Shoot'n Sports' basic First Steps class.

At Target Shooting Solutions, in Avondale, Pa., the training calendar is a

regular reference for new customers.

“We talk to them, person to person, to offer a breakdown of all the training classes we offer so they might find something they're interested in,” confirmed Steve Pavolic, general manager.

Those classes are also routinely promoted in email blasts, which include course highlights and photos, sent to the 40,000 or so customers in the store's database.

FRESH INVENTORY

Many of the first-timers came into the industry at a time of incredible demand. Often, their shopping choices were dictated by sparsely populated shelves. This raises the potential to re-engage customers who didn't get their original first choice, or who simply want something different than what they bought.

With the demand crunch now over, it has

become much easier to offer a broad inventory of options. This can help draw more of those customers back, Pavolic noted.

“I think the trick is being as current as possible,” he said, adding customers are often looking for something that caught their eye. “Maybe they saw it in a movie or in a video game. It's just something that looks cool to them.”

With more than 4,000 guns in stock, Larsen says inventory levels at his Utah store are better now than at any other time. And with it has come customers looking for something different.

It's not necessarily they think they “settled” for something two years ago, he added. Rather, they've come to understand different guns may have different applications.

“Maybe they're

shooting a little bit and have become a little more of an enthusiast,” he proposed. “Then they realize there are other options out there that may serve them better.”

Typically, they seem less constrained by budget considerations.

“Instead of looking at an entry-level gun, they're looking for something with a few more features or a little more refinement,” Larsen confirmed.

AMMUNITION AVAILABILITY'S IMPACT

If there were a silver lining (and no one is suggesting there is) to the spike in ammo prices, it could be the fact newer customers don't notice it as much as those who've been around the industry longer.

After all, if the first box of 9mm ammo you purchased was for \$30,



At Target Shooting Solutions, Steve Pavolic is taking advantage of the slowdown to add diverse inventory — which will appeal to a wide selection of customers.

you'd probably be thrilled to see it for less than \$20.

"The new people: They honestly don't know what they don't know, right?" Biltz agreed.

Still, there's little doubt ammo prices stand as a potential obstacle for some customers, particularly those whose budgets may prohibit a deeper participation in shooting sports and activities.

Pavolic, from Target Shooting Solutions, is happy to see ammo prices falling again, though he doubts we'll ever return to pre-COVID levels. The impact is obvious with some customers.

"I've seen people come through with a little bit of a sticker shock," he said. "They didn't realize guns cost this much, or ammo is as expensive as it is."

POSITIVE ENCOUNTERS KEY

Helping those new customers feel welcome is another key piece of convincing them to come back. At Target Shooting, this means making sure every customer is treated well.

"We want to give them a good experience in the gun community, where I think a lot of shops can be very standoffish," Pavolic said.

While store employees have a major impact on creating this welcoming atmosphere, your customers can also play a role.

The shop helps accomplish this through an open floor plan, including a seating area where regular and newbie customers can mingle and chat. Pavolic said it's routine to see the experienced customers offering words of advice and encouragement.

"The environment really fosters that sort of energy," he noted.

Larsen often sees a similar dynamic at his Utah store, where experienced shooters are eager to help new shooters struggling with some aspect. Of course, it's never a bad idea for employees to keep an eye on those interactions.

"Sometimes we may work to separate customers in the showroom, because somebody's been watching a little too much YouTube and the 'experienced' customer is giving another customer terrible advice," Larsen concluded with a laugh.

When it's all said and done, there's an *opportunity* for growth if your store is successful in re-engaging these first-time buyers from a couple of years ago. It's never too late to try. **SI**

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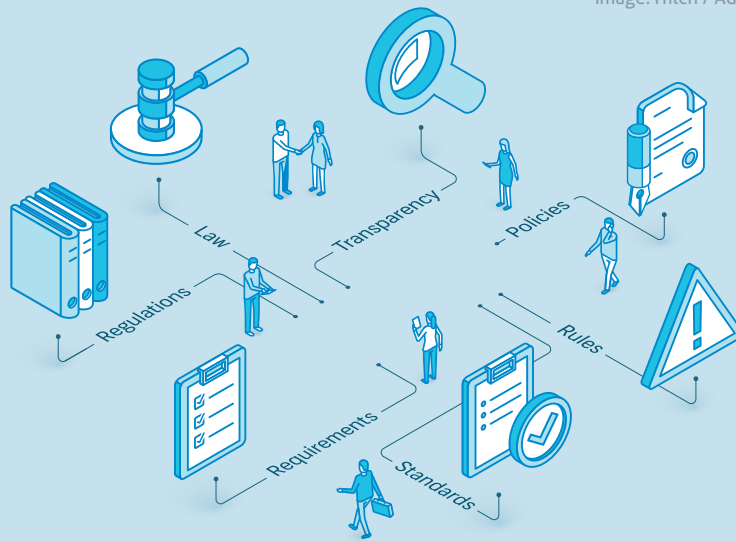
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TECHNOLOGY + COMPLIANCE

By Carolee Anita Boyles

Any firearms retailer who's been through an ATF inspection—which is almost everyone—can tell you how important it is to have every detail handled correctly. Whether it's logging in firearms or reporting multiple handgun sales, tracking the details can make the difference between a clean inspection and a nightmare.

Today's technology can make handling those details more efficient and reduce errors if you're willing to learn how to use programs and systems that fit your business. Consider the tracking of multiple handgun sales, for instance.

"Many software programs will track multiple handgun sales and will catch them every time," stated Wally Nelson, a retired ATF deputy assistant director and a compliance consultant with the NSSF. "Some of them will simply notify you of the need to file a report, and some of them actually print the report out for you to submit to ATF. Recently I've even seen some that automatically email the report to ATF."

SIMPLIFYING MANAGEMENT

Shaun Phelan is VP of sales and marketing for Orchid Advisors, a point-of-sale and retail sales software company serving the firearms industry. Orchid offers a number of pieces of compliance software. Different clients have different needs, Phelan acknowledged, and Orchid Advisors tries to match every client's need to the correct software.

"We started with a point-of-sale system purposely built for the firearms industry with a bound book inside it," Phelan said.

The electronic bound book replaces the handwritten bound book, which means no sloppy handwriting and hard-to-read entries.

"Everything is completely legible, and you can't skip anything," he added. "The software will stop you if you forget to fill out anything and remind you what is needed. Then when the ATF Industry Operations Investigator (IOI) looks at your book, everything he wants to see is right there."

Orchid Advisors continued to build on this system and make it more sophisticated with each passing year.

"Now, we're tied into the FBI and the ATF eZ Check system," Phelan informed. "We're also tied into a document storage system. We have drop-down menus, so you don't even have to type in a manufacturer's name such as 'Smith & Wesson' anymore. You just start typing and the software tells you what it thinks you're looking for so you can select it. This means less keyboarding time and less chance of errors."

Today, the Orchid Advisors bound-book system is completely integrated with its point-of-sale system. When a retailer using this system receives a firearm, all he has to do is type in the serial number of the gun.

"This updates the point-of-sale inventory," Phelan shared. "It also updates the bound book and the retailer's website. With one transaction, you're doing all three things at the same time. You're also saving money, saving time

and reducing keyboard time so you're less likely to make a mistake."

Of course, with everything barcoded now, once a firearm is in the system digitally, you're just scanning barcodes; you don't even have to key in serial numbers manually. A continuous process of upgrades ensures the latest in compliance technology; Orchid Advisors updates enhancements about every two weeks, according to Phelan.

"We're trying to leverage technology to simplify work," he said. "Our goal is to be the compliance experts/back-office support for our FFL retailers."

To this end, Orchid Advisors tracks any bills in Congress related to the sale and transfer of firearms so they can make any necessary changes to their software right away.

SINGLE-SOLUTION SOFTWARE

Michele Salerno is the director of marketing and assistant VP at Celerant Technology. Celerant offers single-solution software for a firearms retailer's entire business.

"It manages everything for a brick-and-mortar store, their range and their online sales," she said. "It includes point of sale, inventory management, CRM, loyalty rewards and range management with lane reservations."

Celerant also designs and manages e-commerce sites for firearms retailers.

"Our e-commerce sites are integrated with the dealer software at the store, so all the different channels can be managed by one centralized system," Salerno noted. "This means their inventory is centralized, so when an item is pulled online it's reflected in the store and vice versa. Retailers can do things like loyalty rewards and memberships both in-store and online."

A number of retailers that use the Celerant system have created their own branded apps customers can download from the app store to their phones.

"If they have a range, they also can have all their range functionality on the app," Salerno shared. "The customer can reserve a lane, book a class, renew a membership, buy a membership or make purchases on the app. Dealers can promote their firearms on the app."

(Users can't purchase a firearm through the app, but if they click on a firearm to buy it, the system will take them to the e-commerce site to complete

the sale.)

Celerant also offers marketplace integration.

"A lot of our dealers sell on GunBroker.com and other marketplaces," Salerno said. "We have an integration with our software where the inventory is linked to GunBroker so when something is sold in the store, on the website or on the app, it's reflected on GunBroker without having to manually make those changes."

All of this connects to the electronic bound book.

"We offer our dealers options," Salerno added. "We have a built-in A&D book in our software they can use. We also offer integration with third-party bound books they can use if they prefer, including FastBound and Gun StoreMaster."

All of this information can be stored digitally in the cloud, reducing both paper usage and errors. Of course, this raises the question of whether information stored in the cloud can be hacked. Salerno shared Celerant has security in place to prevent this from happening.

"ATF COMPLIANCE WITHIN THE SOFTWARE WAS ONE OF THE KEY DECISION POINTS FOR OUR CHOICE."

MITCHELL TYLER, Owner
SafeSide Tactical • Lynchburg, Va.

"However, some dealers are more comfortable maintaining their records on site and not having them in the cloud," she contended, "which is fine, and we offer this as well. Storage in the cloud is optional. We don't want to force any of our dealers to do anything one way. We want to offer options, and we make all these integrations and features in the software so our dealers can see what works best for their business."

BENEFITS IN REAL TIME

Mitchell Tyler owns SafeSide Tactical, a two-location store in Roanoke and Lynchburg, Va. When he wanted a software system that would help him with both inventory management and

compliance, he chose Celerant.

"We were growing fast, and expanding to a second location," he relayed. "We were using multiple systems, which made it really difficult for us to aggregate data in real time. We knew we needed a technology partner that could connect all of the aspects of our business: CRM, e-commerce, range, retail, inventory and marketing, all using the same data."

One reason Tyler chose Celerant was its ability to integrate multiple store locations.

"The other providers we assessed at the time we did this just didn't have the depth of knowledge in the firearms space or were lacking multi-store, multi-channel support," he said.

Concerns about ATF compliance also weighed heavily on Tyler's decision-making.

"ATF compliance within the software was one of the key decision points for our choice," he noted. "Integrating and attaching serialized inventory throughout the process — from receipt to sale — gives us the ability to drill down into serial number movements between stores, manufacturers, our gunsmithing department and more."

Tyler has chosen to use the Form 4473 tracking built into the Celerant system.

"This really helps to connect the digital records with the required ATF paper records," he reasoned. "By tagging transactions with document and approval numbers, we are usually able to complete firearms traces in less than 10 minutes."

Tyler also likes the way the Celerant system handles multiple handgun sales.

"Celerant's systems notify the clerk at the point of sale immediately if it detects a multiple handgun scenario," he said. "With this, front-line staff can get management involved in real time to ensure we're meeting our same-day reporting requirement. Additionally, back-office compliance staff has a custom report that is run daily analyzing firearm dispositions, and groups sales by customer, so it's easy for us to make sure any multiple reports needed get done."

Whether you're the sole proprietor of a local gun store or operate a regional chain, using the technology available to maintain compliance is going to be essential — especially as the White House continues to politicize the ATF. **SI**

Image: Intro / Adobe Stock



Was 2022 a profitable and growing year for your brand or business? Great! The extra growth may mean looking outside for help on matters with marketing, advertising, public relations and social media. This outside help is most likely in the form of an agency — which can identify as a singular consultant, a boutique business with about 15–20 employees or a large business with several employees with multiple specialties.

BY MICHELLE SCHEUERMANN

Secrets of *Working* With Agencies

There's no wrong place on which to land for your business; it really depends on the budget and scope of work. However, there are things to work through that will ensure the success of any agency-client relationship.

BEFORE CONTACTING AN AGENCY

Sure, a quick Google search will land dozens of options for agencies in a

particular area, but with the advent of Zoom meetings, consider the option of searching nationally — especially for a specific niche such as the gun industry. While our industry is big, it's also small, so the best course of action is to ask colleagues for advice.

Nick Hoffman, host of "Nick's Wild Ride" on the Outdoor Channel and a

touring musician who has hired many agencies over his career, shared, “When I’m looking for an agency to work with or a consultant to help me with a particular thing, the first task I do is ask around to industry colleagues I trust for a referral. Typically, they’ll only suggest someone they have had a positive experience with and I’m less likely to waste time with a bad fit.”

Kim Emery, owner of Firefly Publicity and has worked as an in-house marketing manager and within advertising and public relations agencies, recommends considering a few things first in order to help choose the right size agency for your needs.

“Do you want to hire a big agency that can provide all of your marketing services under one roof, or do you want to hire experts who are focused on digital advertising or public relations, etc.?” she queried. “Will other clients with bigger budgets get the agency’s attention? Most importantly, do they understand your business and can they work with your internal team and other agency partners to create a cohesive plan in all communication channels?”

Tim Brandt, president of Murray Road Agency, who works with clients such as Silencer Central and Remington, suggested diving into those agencies and seeing who they have worked with — or are currently working with — and if it’s a good fit as far as values, brand and tone.



NICK HOFFMAN



KIM EMERY



TIM BRANDT



JODI STEMLER

Emery concurs, “Just like you’d want to do a background check on a new hire, you may want to Google the agency owners to see if any issues come to light.”

ESTABLISHING EXPECTATIONS

Brandt stressed having expectations and goals set *before* reaching out to agencies.

“Make sure you have tangible goals and metrics established that are aligned with your expectations so you can measure and manage success — or lack thereof,” he advised.

Oh yes, a lack of goals and expectations can ruin any great partnership, so it’s best to be clear right from the get-go. Hoffman said it well, “How can they [the agency] help you if they don’t know exactly what you need?”

The biggest mistake business owners make when hiring an agency is “figuring it out on the fly.” Meaning, calling the agency without knowing what is truly needed. Agencies can’t read minds and they also aren’t therapists. Talking through a business’s problems during a first meeting isn’t going to help crystalize the solution any better. In fact, it might raise a red flag for the agency. It’s best to sit down with key partners/internal staff to establish goals and KPIs (agency-speak for Key Performance Indicators) immediately.

“Sometimes you don’t know what you don’t know,” shared Jodi Stemler, owner of Stemler Consulting, which offers communication and policy expertise for the outdoor industry. “But if you want to engage with an agency, it means you’ve already identified an issue or an opportunity, and you need to have some sideboards to help guide the conversation.”

When establishing a working partnership, Hoffman stressed not to be afraid to ask an agency how they communicate and operate.

“Do they check in with you daily, weekly, monthly? How do they report back to you what they have been doing on your behalf and the progress they have made? Everyone, on both sides, operates differently. Just because they have the qualifications you need might not mean you’ll work well with them or they’ll fit into your system,” he said.

Agencies need to be apprised of changes at the company that can change agency direction or emphasis. For example, if supply chain constraints are changing product delivery timelines, let the agency know so they can change the timing of paid ads, social and PR — otherwise, you’re wasting money and frustrating consumers.

KIM EMERY • Owner
Firefly Publicity

”

PITFALLS TO AVOID

The agency-client relationship is like any other partnership; it must have clear communication, solid goals and expectations, trust and honesty. On paper this sounds nice, but the reality can be different. For example, hiring a New York City agency sounds impressive and will certainly show competitors you mean business, but is it necessary?

Hoffman shares his experience: “I try to avoid huge agencies that have high-profile clients. These types of organizations aren’t tailored for smaller businesses like mine, and I often feel like I get handed to a junior associate where I get lost in the mix. This isn’t always the case, but I can’t afford to chance wasting my limited budget on someone who doesn’t have time to focus on a little guy. On the flip side, beware of hiring someone who is too small and is overwhelmed with clients. They might not be able to offer you the kind of attention you want. Or, they may not have the experience you need to deliver what you need.”

Another pitfall is ensuring the business has the internal staff to assist the agency.

“One major consideration to make when you’re ready to hire an agency is can you/your team manage, facilitate and enable them in a way that benefits everyone? Agencies shouldn’t add substantial time to your day and need to be turnkey extensions of you/your team’s efforts. But there’s going to be a lift from the business to onboard, manage and communicate with the agency,” Brandt explained.

In other words, don’t assume once the contract is signed your part in this is over — in fact, it has just begun.

“For pitfalls to avoid, everything comes back to communication and when there are different expectations on who is doing the work,” shared Stemler. “Is the agency doing the detail work for you? Or are you that person? Keep in mind if the agency is doing the detail work, there will be hours marked to that.”

Detail work can be anything from finding photos for your revamped website to writing your bio to giving the company’s history timeline. Entire projects have been held up because the agency is waiting on the client for these

small — but meaningful — details.

AFTER THE CONTRACT IS SIGNED

After the establishment of a working relationship, Emery stressed setting regular meeting cadences.

“Agencies need to be apprised of changes at the company that can change agency direction or emphasis,” he noted. “For example, if supply chain constraints are changing product delivery timelines, let the agency know so they can change the timing of paid ads, social and PR — otherwise, you’re wasting money and frustrating consumers.”

Brandt agrees: “Communication also needs to be fluid, dynamic and informative. If you have a PR agency, make sure they can see/gain insights into what you’re doing in an area like social (or content, owned marketing channels, etc). You don’t need to give up proprietary information or drag your agency into multiple meetings. But arming the agency with simple ‘look-ins’ into other areas of your marketing efforts will enable them to ensure what they’re doing for you is in alignment with what you’re doing elsewhere. And it should be a win for everyone involved.”

Hoffman also agreed regularly scheduled meetings are great, but also to set time to talk about other things than business.

“Getting to know the people who are working for you will go a long way toward getting the most productivity from an agency for the money you spend,” he proposed.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Finding the right time to engage an agency is a balancing act. Too soon might mean paying for a monthly retainer that isn’t being utilized — or too late means putting the agency at a disadvantage because everything must be done *now*.

It’s also a huge leap financially. Hoffman said he realized the time to hire was when he started dropping balls in some parts of his business because he was overwhelmed in other areas.

“This is often a tough pill to swallow, to realize you can’t do it all, but it’s *always* worth it in the end. You need to find help where you are weak in order for you — and the business — to grow,” he concluded. **SI**



The agency-client relationship is like any other partnership: it must have clear communication, solid goals and expectations, trust and honesty.

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**SHOOTING
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MARKETING TO THE TURKEY HUNTER



Image: Howard Communications

By Ken Perrotte

White-tailed deer may be, overall, the most widely hunted big-game animals in North America. But when it comes to hunter fanaticism, it often centers on the pursuit of feathers — turkey feathers.

In an evolving world where tools and technology are letting hunters be successful with longer shots, the turkey hunting experience — at its essence — mostly remains up close and personal. Few things hook a hunter more than learning how to use the right call to strike up a dialogue with a fired-up gobbler and then feeling adrenaline pump when that longbeard gobbles so close and urgently, the overhead leaves seem to shudder and shed morning dew.

Turkey hunting, like deer hunting, used to be a mostly spartan endeavor, but manufacturers have increasingly innovated to create products designed to help hunters be more successful and more comfortable. Lifelike decoys, red dot optics on specialized shotguns, portable blinds, comfy low-profile seats, amped-up ammo and seasonally appropriate camo are all in play.

Marketing to North America's legions of turkey aficionados is all about timing and understanding the customer. Two successful retailers share their thoughts on closing the deal with the gobbler getters.

AMMO INNOVATION DRIVING CHANGE

Green Top Sporting Goods in Ashland, Va., is in the heart of the eastern wild turkey habitat. The National Wild Turkey Federation was founded in Fredericksburg, just 45 minutes north, in 1973.

Brad Stephenson is Green Top's in-house turkey expert. He credits ammunition innovations with driving a 180-degree shift in turkey hunting

firearms from a generation ago.

"When I got into turkey hunting, most people were using their standard field shotgun with 2.75" or 3" Hi-Brass lead No. 5s or 4s and a factory full choke," Stephenson said. "As people wanted more pellets and more range, 10 GA 'turkey guns' came about, and the 12 GA 3.5" chamber really came to the forefront as people were looking for 10 GA payloads in a gun that could also shoot standard length, 12 GA shells in other circumstances."



WE ALWAYS TRY TO CARRY THE 'NEW HOTNESS' FROM THE MAJOR MANUFACTURERS KNOWING THOSE ITEMS WILL BE THE ONES ADVERTISING DOLLARS ARE SPENT ON EACH YEAR."

BRAD STEPHENSON • Turkey Expert
Green Top Sporting Goods
Ashland, Va.

This seminal market shift signaled the advent of specialization, with "extra-full chokes, shorter barrels, camo dips, high-viz sights, rifle sights, red dot, etc.," he observed. "Most of these improvements were geared to bigger, better, farther," he added.

Stephenson said the TSS (tungsten super shot) ammo revolution has stretched the turkey hunting market, with the energy yielded by such small pellets making previously sub-gauge

guns like the .410- and 28 GA viable turkey killers at standard ranges out to 40 yards.

"There's been a huge swing in the mindset of many turkey hunters from bigger and farther to comfortable, convenient and fun," Stephenson reasoned. "These little sub-gauge guns are so much smaller and lighter they are a joy to tote around all morning, are a lot easier to hold up for extended periods while waiting for a tom to close those last yards and are great for getting women and children into turkey hunting with the reduced recoil."

NOT JUST ONE TYPE OF HUNTER

Rees Vail, vice president of Fin Feather Fur Outfitters, a six-store chain in northern Ohio, says decoys offer additional examples of how things have evolved.

"The old Feather Flex \$6 foam decoy we had back in the day has transitioned to the ultra-realistic models of today, costing up to \$200. Things have evolved," Vail said. "You can spend \$2,000–\$3,000 to shoot a 20-lb. turkey."

In a sense, the evolution isn't much different than what was seen in the deer hunting market a couple of decades earlier. Many hunters of old owned one rifle and had one set of red or green wool pants and jacket. A box of .30-06 shells would last a few years.

Contrast that mid-20th century vision with today. Stephenson believes there are as many types of "turkey customers" as there are types of people.

"We see them all," he stated. "There's the guy using the same camo and call his grandpa gave him in the '70s who just needs 10 more shells. There's the guy who has everything he needs, but still just has to see what's new. There's the novice who has never been hunting, but saw something cool online and wants to try it. Then, there's the guy who is an experienced hunter, but not of turkeys, and now he's looking to expand."

WHEN TO BUY, PROMOTE

At Green Top, the turkey market comprises a small portion of the big store's overall business, but



Remington Premier TSS



Mossberg 500 Turkey Optic-Ready 20 GA
(Mossy Oak Greenleaf)



A Green Top sales associate (right) runs through the selling points of a Mossberg 940 Pro Turkey (12 GA, 24" model) shotgun with a customer.

Stephenson contends chasing the wily birds is an “integral part of our hunting culture.” It’s why the store puts a premium on supporting the turkey hunting customer.

“We place our spring turkey hunting orders in the fall, hoping for product to start arriving in January,” he said. “With supply chains being what they are, most turkey products arrive in February and March. Our inventory of turkey gear explodes when these big orders start rolling in the back door.”

Green Top begins launching promotions featuring select turkey gear in March and continues through the season opener in early April.

“Consumer demand sees a noticeable uptick in March as those who don’t want to be without begin hunting down whatever gear they want for the upcoming season,” Stephenson explained, “but most turkey hunters are like many other hunters out there and there’s always a mad rush during the last week before the season begins.”

Success, or lack thereof, also breeds sales. Hunters struggling to get a bird often seek out new calls or decoys, he added.

Vail said Fin Feather Fur Outfitters maintains an extensive, direct-mail subscriber list and they’ll fill spring inboxes with targeted turkey hunting email blasts.

“A month-long ad also has multiple pages of turkey-specific items,” he

added. “The marketing definitely gets people to come to the stores — gets them thinking about what they have or don’t have in their turkey vest.”

Fin Feature Fur’s assortment spans vests to blinds, ammo, calls, decoys and camo, with many major brands represented, including Benelli, Browning, Sitka, Rocky, Lacrosse, Alps and Avian-X.

MOSTLY INFORMED/INFLUENCED CONSUMERS

Vail is mindful not all gear is appropriate for all turkey hunters. Helping a new hunter, for example, pick the right latex mouth call for his or her experience level, is important.

“Most turkey hunters, unless they’re new, don’t need a lot of attention or assistance,” he contends. “They know what they can handle or need. A new person might need advice, especially when it comes to things like calls and helping them make an appropriate selection for a mouth call. The same with selecting the right choke tube for a shotgun.”

Stephenson noted a challenge facing his store is staying up on which brands have the biggest presence in the market.

“The companies making turkey hunting products do their best to influence customers to try their products,” he said. “Our main challenge is to figure out which companies have

been successful in reaching customers, what the customer is going to come to the store looking for and then to make sure we have enough of the correct products.”

Green Top’s spring assortment is robust, according to Stephenson. It includes turkey-specific shotguns from most major manufacturers. These guns are usually fully camouflaged, have shorter barrels with extended, extra-full turkey chokes, high-visibility sights or are optics-ready or equipped.

New TSS ammo is revolutionizing the game, but many consumers can’t (or don’t want to) spend about \$10 a shell, so turkey ammunition offerings range from economy lead-shot loads, to loads that pattern tighter and farther like Winchester’s Longbeard XR, Federal’s Premium Flight-Control shells or HEVI-Shot’s Magnum Blend.



THE MARKETING DEFINITELY GETS PEOPLE TO COME TO THE STORES — GETS THEM THINKING ABOUT WHAT THEY HAVE OR DON’T HAVE IN THEIR TURKEY VEST.”

REES VAIL • Vice President
Fin Feather Fur Outfitters
Youngstown, Ohio

Then there are accessories. Green Top carries call holsters, “lounger” seats, skirt-type ground blinds and pop-up blinds, including some spacious models that are invaluable when taking disabled persons, kids or the family hunting together.

Decoy options range from inexpensive flex-foam models to taxidermy-quality decoys like the ones from Avian-X and Dave Smith.

“While traditional hen and jake decoys are still the top sellers, we carry 1/4-strut, 1/2-strut and full-strut decoys, as well as the ‘reaping’ strutter

decoys meant to be crawled behind,” Stephenson informed. “All of these have become very popular in recent years.”

The sheer volume of commercially made turkey calls on the market is staggering; not to mention the thousands of independent call makers around the country.

“We always try to carry the ‘new hotness’ from the major manufacturers knowing those items will be the ones advertising dollars are spent on each year,” Stephenson said.

SPRING INTO ACTION

Many states have fall turkey seasons, but hunter enthusiasm is considerably lower than the spring gobbler phenomenon.

Green Top carries some turkey items for the fall hunter, but nowhere near the scale of the spring plus-up. Vail says his outfit is similar, with fall turkeys often taken as a target of opportunity while deer hunting. Spring, though, gets the juices flowing.

“After a long winter, Ohio outdoorsmen and women are ready for spring,” Vail shared. “Everyone wants to get their fishing gear out, go

find mushrooms and get ready for turkey season. It’s when they look at their turkey vest and realize they need to replace some mouth calls or lost gear.”

Reaching Green Top customers involves a triple-threat approach involving marketing strategy, targeted advertising and social media information and engagement.

“This is certainly how you reach most folks to let them know what gear you carry, and to remind them the season is approaching, but our experienced sales staff is how we really connect with the customer,” Stephenson said. “We have a lot of salespeople who are avid turkey hunters, myself included. When a customer comes in looking for information or help with turkey hunting, they’re referred to the experienced staff by our non-turkey hunting salespeople. One-on-one is where we can really help someone.”

According to Vail, the consumer market for outdoor gear in general and the turkey hunter in specific varies when it comes to motivation and the type of gear customers want or need, and their receptiveness to marketing

and new products.

Basically, some people are brand loyalists, brand reliant, he explained: “I think this applies to hunting in general. Some people don’t just own a cooler, they own a Yeti; the same with Sitka apparel.”

Figuring out the customer’s motivations or allegiances can help drive sales.

CAPITALIZE ON COMMUNICATION CLUTTER

The deluge of online information is influencing buyer decisions. Stephenson says most customers are watching YouTube videos, looking at social media or surfing the web. Some still read magazines or watch hunting channels on traditional satellite or cable television.

Green Top produces its own material for online consumption, including podcasts and videos, along with blogs. Fin Feather Fur Outfitters is following suit, seeking to ramp up content for its YouTube channel and increasing blog content.

Rees sometimes worries about losing the next generation to the competing crush of things internet related. Such concerns are why retailers like Green Top and Fin Feather Fur have special events designed to get families to the stores and outdoors. Green Top has a multi-day outdoor expo with loads of activities for youngsters and Fin Feather Fur stages an annual a Kids’ Day at a conservation farm.

Still, having an immense volume of content available across ever-increasing media and communication platforms is the cliché “new norm.” Figuring out how to use it to your retailing advantage is essential. In-store “a-ha” moments related to new features and capabilities are increasingly slim with today’s savvy turkey hunting consumer.

“While our salesmen are happy to show and explain new features to customers, most customers come into the store with knowledge of these new products from hunting videos and other hunting media,” Stephenson confirmed. “It’s not hard to sell them on the concept, it’s just a matter of finding the right product at the right price for them.” **\$I**



**SAUER SL5 Turkey
Mossy Oak Bottomland Camo**



According to Fin Feather Fur Outfitters’ Rees Vail, finding out a customer’s allegiances and motivations will help secure sales and build trust.

2023**NEW**

PRODUCT SHOWCASE

By Jenna Buckley & Jade Moldae

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SMITH & WESSON

(800) 331-0852
smith-wesson.com

S&W adds to its M&P family with the full-size **M&P5.7** with 22-round capacity. Designed within the M&P5.7 is the company's new gas-operated, locked-breech, rotating Tempo Barrel System. The 5" barrel allows for a quicker extraction once the bullet passes the gas port, creating a more secured fireform effect. The M&P5.7 is slide cut for optics, has a Picatinny-style rail and includes a 1/2x28 threaded muzzle with thread protector. Its single-action flat-face trigger maintains a crisp break and is designed to allow for consistent finger placement. The M&P5.7 ships with two magazines.

STURM, RUGER & CO.

(336) 949-5200
ruger.com

The Ruger **ONE-SHOT** is a direct magazine replacement for Ruger American rifles in short-action calibers, including many calibers used for hunting (350 Legend, 450 Bushmaster, 300 Blackout, .308 Winchester, 6.5 Creedmoor, etc.). The sled ships with a magazine well to adapt rifles configured from the factory to accept AR-, AI- or Mini Thirty-pattern magazines. When inserted in the rifle, the One-Shot sled fits flush with the stock and does not interfere when carrying a slung rifle or shooting from a bag or backpack.

The **AR-556 MPR** features an 18" PROOF Research carbon fiber wrapped barrel and a rifle-length gas system paired with chambering in .223 Wylde. The lower receiver is fitted with Magpul PRS Lite stock and the Magpul MOE-K2 grip provides ergonomic access to trigger and safety controls. Its Ruger Elite 452 AR-Trigger is a two-stage trigger offering a smooth, crisp, 4.5-lb. trigger pull. Magpul M-LOK accessory attachment slots are along the 3, 6 and 9 o'clock positions with additional slots on the angled faces near the muzzle. The muzzle brake is a radial port design that significantly reduces felt recoil and muzzle movement. OAL is 37.83"-39" and it weighs 7.4 lbs. It includes one, 30-round Magpul PMAG magazine.

WRANGLER single-action revolvers are now available with longer barrels (6.5" and 7.5") and a Single-Six pattern grip frame, each offered in three attractive Cerakote colors. The revolvers are ideal for learning to shoot, introducing friends or family to the sport or just experiencing the fun of single-action shooting.



CZ-USA

(800) 955-4486
cz-usa.com

The **CZ TS 2 ORANGE** sport pistol in .40 S&W and 9mm from CZ-USA is designed for competition in the IPSC. The 5.2" bull barrel delivers increased accuracy, better control and a significantly longer service life. The hand-fitted barrel-to-slide and slide-to-frame provide the tightest tolerances, and the CZ Shadow 2-style front attachment system allows quick and easy sight removal. Extra serrations on the top front edge of the slide ensure more comfortable cocking. It also boasts higher-positioned ambidextrous safeties, a reduced-height magazine release button and modified recoil spring guide for simplified disassembly. OAL is 8.86" and it weighs 50.3 oz.





FAB DEFENSE

fab-defenseus.com

FAB Defense's patented GL-Shock was the original stock that offered shock absorption features in a compact AR carbine stock. Now, the **GL-CORE IMPACT** improves on this feature and adds three adjustable settings suitable for light-to-heavy recoil firearms while modernizing the overall look and feel. Through the use of included adapters, the GL-CORE IMPACT will mount to any mil-spec or commercial AR-15 buffer tube and can be easily adapted to mitigate the recoil to levels comfortable for each individual user.



MEOPTA SPORTS OPTICS

(800) 828-8928
meoptasportsoptics.com

The **MEOSIGHT IV** low-profile red dot reflex sight by MeoOpta weighs just 1.2 oz. It can also be mounted to a primary rifle scope for fast and accurate close-quarter target acquisition or mounted directly to an accessory rail. Featuring 1X magnification, a 3 MOA dot and an aircraft-grade aluminum body, it has 120 MOA range of elevation and 120 MOA of windage adjustment. The illumination feature has a manual or automatic mode, and the brightness is easily adjustable to five different intensity levels. The MeoSight IV is compatible with standard-size optics-ready pistol systems using a Docter adapter plate and comes with a Picatinny rail mount.

HEVI-SHOT

(541) 367-3522
hevishot.com

HEVI-METAL XTREME uses Pattern Density technology that layers 30% original HEVI-Shot 12g/cc tungsten over 70% precision steel pellets. HEVI-Metal Xtreme uses the FLIGHTCONTROL FLEX wad. The rear-braking wad is designed to improve pattern density, consistency and can be used with any steel-rated choke (ported or non-ported). HEVI-Metal Xtreme is offered in: 12g, 3", 1.25 oz., 1,450 fps (#4 tungsten and #1 steel); 12g, 3", 1.25 oz., 1,450 fps (#6 tungsten and #3 steel); 20g, 3", 1.0625 oz., 1,350 fps (#4 tungsten and #1 steel); and 20g, 3", 1.0625 oz., 1,350 fps (#6 tungsten and #3 steel).



COLT'S MFG.

(800) 962-2658
colt.com

The **CBX PRECISION RIFLE** from Colt is an advanced bolt-action chassis rifle with features ideal for competitive shooters. It boasts a flat-bottom receiver to reduce flex and improve accuracy, AICS magazine compatibility (includes five-round Magpul magazine), black nitride barrel finish, carbon steel, button-rifled barrel, ergonomic two-position safety, 60° bolt throw, one-piece Picatinny rail — Rem700 compatible, aluminum chassis with a user-adjustable LOP and cheek weld, extended forend (15") with ACRA rail and M-LOK slots, aggressive barricade stop, user-adjustable trigger (2.5–5 lbs.), pistol grip, thumb shelf, QD cups and an ambidextrous mag latch. It is offered in 6.5 Creedmoor (26" barrel) and .308 Win. (24" barrel) models.

SPYPOINT

(888) 779-7646
spypoint.com

Available summer 2023, the **FLEX-S** camera from SPYPOINT harnesses the power of the sun with an integrated solar panel charging an internal lithium battery (but also allows for eight AA backups or the addition of the LIT-22 battery pack). It produces 33 MP photos and 1080p videos (with sound), and uses dual-SIM configuration to connect to the best network regardless of the service provider. Additional features include 100' detection and flash range and a highly responsive trigger speed of up to 0.3 seconds.

Also available summer 2023, the **LM2** trail camera offers hunters 20MP photos so no detail is missed while scouting. Its antenna maximizes available signal in a given area, ensuring photos are viewable in the app to help hunters plan their hunt accordingly. It boasts a half-second trigger speed and 90' detection and flash range.



80X CHEETAH

BERETTA USA

(800) 237-3882
beretta.com

Beretta's **80X CHEETAH** boasts a sleek design and enhanced features. It includes a smaller Vertec-style grip profile, the X-treme S Double/Single trigger, skeletonized hammer, 14-round capacity and is optics-ready. With an easier-to-rack slide, lightened recoil from tuning of the slide weight, spring rates and chambering in .380, the 80X CheetaH is designed with an enhanced fit and style for elevated speed and control. The 80X CheetaH comes in a premium assortment of color options with limited-edition multi-tone variants and finishes.

The 12 GA **A300 ULTIMA PATROL SHOTGUN** was engineered to be ultra-reliable and easy to manipulate. Featuring the classic mechanisms of the venerable A300 platform, this tactical shotgun includes enlarged controls, an enhanced loading port, a thinner forend design with multiple M-Lok and QD sling mounting points and an eight-shot extended-magazine tube secured by a custom barrel clamp with integral M-Lok capability.



DIAMONDBACK FIREARMS

(321) 305-5995
diamondbackfirearms.com

The Diamondback **SIDEKICK BIRDSHEAD REVOLVER** features a frame and handle made from zinc with a Cerakote finish. The compact revolver stands at 4.95" tall, 1.4" width, OAL of 7.83", and weighs 24.5 oz. The 3" barrel has a 1:16" right-hand twist. With a capacity of nine rounds, the revolver is ideal for personal protection or target shooting. The single-action trigger pull is a lightweight 2 lbs., while the double-action trigger pull is a smooth 16 lbs. The front sights feature a blade design, and the rear sights are integral in the design of the revolver.



MAXIM DEFENSE

(239) 580-7800
maximdefense.com

PRS SUPPRESSORS join Maxim Defense's MSX line of suppressors, and feature a state-of-the-art MonoKore design of three simple pieces. PRS Suppressors decrease flash and recoil while increasing accuracy. They are fully and easily serviceable and add 7.25" to the firearm. The suppressors drop sound well below hearing-safe levels (specific reduction based on firearm configuration, ammunition, barrel length and atmospheric conditions) an average of 131.9dB on an 18" bolt-action rifle, 6.5 Creedmoor, measured at the shooter's left ear. PRS Suppressors are available in 6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Win., have a 5/8-24 thread pitch, weigh 10.8 oz., have a 1.75" outer diameter and Cerakote/Type III hard coat anodized finish.



FN AMERICA

(703) 288-3500
fnamerica.com

The **FN SCAR 15P** rifle-caliber pistol in 5.56x45mm features a non-reciprocating bolt carrier assembly enabling all shooting positions, and the charging handle doubles as a hand stop. Its short-stroke gas piston system has an adjustable low-flash gas regulator. The free-floating, cold hammer-forged, chrome-lined barrel is 7.5", and the one-piece machined aluminum upper delivers enduring accuracy. The FN SCAR 15P is offered in black or Flat Dark Earth and ships with one 30-round magazine or one 10-round magazine. OAL is 19.75".



CVA

(770) 449-4687
cva.com

From BPI Outdoors/CVA, the **PARAMOUNT PRO V2** long-range muzzleloader has a custom designed Grayboe stock 8 oz. lighter than its predecessor in .45-caliber and 2 oz. lighter in .50-caliber. The stock features an adjustable cheek riser and the Micro-Adjust Williams peep sight is standard on the .50-caliber (the .45-caliber is drilled and tapped to accept the peep sight). Removable stock spacers allow for perfect LOP adjustment and the Limbsaver recoil pad substantially reduces felt recoil. Additional specs include a TriggerTech fully adjustable trigger; free-floating Bergara barrel with nitride treatment and Cerakote finish. The barrel is threaded for a PARAMOUNT muzzlebrake and comes with a self-deploying compact ramrod. The PARAMOUNT PRO V2 is delivered with a Quake Claw Sling.



ALPS OUTDOORZ

(800) 344-2577
alpsoutdoorz.com

The **UPLAND GAME VEST X 2.0** from Alps OutdoorZ boasts an expandable and removable waist belt covering 26 to 62" waist sizes, and the wide and comfortable adjustable shoulder straps accommodate hunters of all sizes. The oversized game pocket has 16" of adjustment to accommodate heavy game loads and is easy to clean. Incorporated onto the game pocket is a 17" rear storage compartment and a zippered valuables pocket. A MOLLE system integrated into the waist belt offers multiple attachment points for compatible items. The included shell pockets feature a one-handed magnetic opening and closure and double as a gun rest.



5.11 TACTICAL

(866) 451-1726
511tactical.com

Built to take on any shift for any job, 5.11 Tactical's **A/T MID WP** has a 3D molded rubber toe and Tac Dry and blood borne pathogen-resistant membrane to keep feet protected and dry. The slip- and oil-resistant outsole gives wearers a safe and stable footing in a work environment while the All Terrain Load Assistance System (A.T.L.A.S.) technology gives support on long shifts when there are heavy loads to carry. Inside, support and comfort is facilitated by the Ortholite footbed, Force Foam heel and Echo Foam forefoot. The footwear is available in black or Dark Coyote in men's sizes 4, 5, 6-12, 13 and 14 and Wide 7-12, 13 and 14.



VORTEX OPTICS

(800) 486-7839
vortexoptics.com

Vortex Optics' Strike Eagle line is designed for gun enthusiasts and competitive shooters operating in dynamic shooting scenarios. The **STRIKE EAGLE 3-18X44 FFP RIFLESCOPE** boasts rugged construction, a sophisticated reticle and superior optical quality. Its robust 34mm tube accommodates large amounts of elevation and windage travel. The illuminated EBR-7C reticle gets on target fast at any magnification or lighting situation, while the internal XD Optical System produces higher resolution and color fidelity for sharper images, near or far. The RevStop Zero System ensures a reliable return to zero and an exposed and locking elevation turret with a distinct tactile feel.

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The **SHOOTING BUNDLE** from Otis Technology includes eye protection, 26dB Ear Shield Ranger passive earmuffs, a 10-pack of targets, an 11" x 17" gun cleaning mat and an Otis Tactical Universal Gun Cleaning Kit for .17-cal-12 GA firearms.

Otis' Ripcord product line has expanded and now offers a line of **RIPCORD DELUXE KITS**. The kits include a Ripcord plus caliber/gauge specific bore brush and cotton bore mop, Shooter's Choice FP-10 Lubricant Elite CLP (0.5 oz) dropper tip bottle, a short AP brush that locks into the notch of the T-handle for better grip and a microfiber gun cloth.



XS SIGHTS

(888) 744-4880
xssights.com

XS Sights introduces **LEVER RAILS FOR HENRY BIG BOY CARBINES CHAMBERED IN .357 MAGNUM (HN-6001R-N) AND .44 MAGNUM (HN-6002R-N)**. The Lever Rails are machined from aircraft-grade aluminum and hard-coat anodized to provide a lightweight mounting system tough enough for a lifetime of service. The rail bolts on to round barrel models of the Henry Big Boy for a quick, DIY upgrade. Machined to mil-std 1913 Picatinny specifications, the XS Lever Rail extends from the rear of the receiver to the front sight dovetail cut to allow mounting of any optic. XS Sights' Lever Rails for the Henry Big Boy carbines are designed for carbines with steel receivers and round barrels. Due to differences in barrel contour, the rails and sights are caliber specific. The XS Lever Rail will not fit carbines with brass receivers, and it will not fit carbines with octagonal barrels.



FEDERAL POWER-SHOK 360 BUCKHAMMER

FEDERAL AMMUNITION

(800) 379-1732
federalpremium.com

FEDERAL POWER-SHOK 360

BUCKHAMMER is now available in 180-grain and 200-grain offerings. The straight-wall cartridge is specifically designed for lever-actions, legal in more areas and is deadly accurate past 200 yards. The 0.358" diameter bullet delivers energy and trajectory similar to 30-30 Win., with softer recoil for better accuracy in the field.

Federal adds 3" **28 GA** loads to its Black Cloud line of waterfowl loads. Black Cloud loads use the FLITECONTROL FLEX wad to deliver better pattern density and consistency through both ported and standard waterfowl chokes. The high-performance primer and clean-burning, temperature-stable propellant significantly decrease residue in the barrel.

PUNCH 30 SUPER CARRY ammo boasts significantly less recoil than 9mm Luger. It delivers the same power as 9mm Luger with as many as three more rounds of magazine capacity in currently available handguns. It delivers balanced performance across different platforms and through the most common barriers.



TAURUS USA

(800) 327-3776
taurususa.com

The **TAURUSTX 22 COMPACT** features a 13-round staggered column magazine, slide-mounted mini red dot sight mount and a 3.6" suppressor-ready threaded barrel. Its clean-breaking trigger and industry-standard sights round out the package.



LEUPOLD & STEVENS INC.

(800) 538-7653
leupold.com

Leupold's **BX-4 RANGE HD** binocular combines the company's DNA laser engine and ballistics software with its award-winning BX-4 binocular, allowing hunters and shooters to spot and range targets at the same time without wasting valuable seconds switching between gear. Its high contrast red OLED display delivers visible readouts in any light, and its edge-to-edge resolution makes glassing sessions easy on the eyes. True Ballistic Range/Wind (TBR/W) technology offers 25 selectable ballistics groups that account for the user's preferred cartridge. The BX-4 Range HD ranges reflective targets at 2,600 yards, trees at 1,600 yards and deer-sized game at 1,100 yards.



OUTDOOR EDGE

(800) 447-3343
outdooredge.com

The **RAZORPRO S** is a modification to Outdoor Edge's RazorPro G double folder. The S version was modified to include a bone saw made of 65 MN spring steel for wear resistance and toughness combined with the 3.5" replaceable drop-point blade. With its rubberized TPR handle, stainless steel blades and spring steel saw with chrome coating, this knife is built to withstand the use and abuse of serious outdoor enthusiasts while being small enough to easily fit into a pocket or daypack for easy all-day access. The RazorPro S comes with six drop-point replacement blades and a Kryptek camouflage sheath.

ARMASIGHT

(888) 504-2762
armasight.com

From Armasight, the **CONTRACTOR 640** thermal weapon sight is built on the company's proprietary Iron Wolf 1.1 technology platform, and utilizes the ArmaCORE 640 12 micron thermal core. It combines extensive detection capabilities and a rich, detailed picture with onboard image processing, wireless communication interface, GPS and internal memory. The Contractor thermal weapon sight comes in three versions: 2.3-9.2x35mm, 3-12x50mm and 4.8-19.2x75mm, and offers a premium-component build that is noticeably more compact and lighter weight than conventional thermal scopes.





EAA CORP.

(321) 639-4842
eaacorp.com

Available from EAA Corp., the **WITNESS 2311** by Girsan was designed to utilize standard double-stack 1911 magazines as well as the traditional polymer grip, receiver and the top end of Girsan 1911 handguns in 9mm, .45 ACP and 10mm. The Witness 2311 is available in 9mm (17-round capacity), .45 ACP (11-round capacity) and 10mm (15-round capacity).



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SilencerCo's low back-pressure suppressor, the **VELOS LBP**, offers exceptional sound performance for the 5.56 caliber with minimized back pressure to host firearms. Features of the suppressor include: 5.98" length, 15.2 oz. weight, full-auto rated with no barrel restrictions, 17-4 stainless steel construction and a 3D printed Inconel 625 core, V-Series Cerakote finish, compatibility with Charlie mounting accessories. The Velos LBP ships with an internal Charlie flash hider front cap, a Charlie ASR mount, an ASR flash hider in 1/2 x 28, a spanner wrench and a Charlie tool.

CRKT

(800) 891-3100
crkt.com

The **DEFINITIVE** from designer MJ Lerch is one of the first CRKT knives to incorporate a Crossbar Lock. Fast, smooth and fully ambidextrous, the Crossbar is easy to operate and very fidget-friendly. The 3.7" drop-point blade uses 154CM steel, providing exceptional strength and edge retention, while its black G10 handle offers solid all-weather grip. A prominent thumb stud allows for quick deployment with one hand and its deep-carry pocket clip and overall weight of just 3 oz. mean the Definitive will rest comfortably and discreetly in a pocket.



CHRISTENSEN ARMS

(888) 517-8855
christensenarms.com

Christensen Arms' **FLASH FORGED TECHNOLOGY UPGRADE KITS** allow users to transform their Mesa or Ridgeline models — or any other Remington 700-based rifle — into a lightweight hunting rifle. The kit includes an FFT Sporter stock, FFT floor plate and FFT bolt knob which, when combined, deliver more than a pound in weight savings. The FFT Stock weighs 1 lb., 1.8 oz. (short action), has a 13.5" LOP, stainless steel pillars, recoil pad and single front sling stud and single rear stud. The FFT floor plate weighs 0.3 oz. and features raised Christensen lettering. The FFT bolt knob weighs 0.2 oz., and is larger than a standard bolt knob.

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2023 **NEW** PRODUCT SHOWCASE



THE HEADREST SAFE COMPANY LLC

theheadrestsafe.com

THE HEADREST SAFE will fit in most vehicles with a two-prong post headrest pattern and can easily be installed. The safe is completely covered in 0.5" foam rubber and constructed from 18-gauge steel with a 16-gauge steel door. The quick-access SILS System biometric lock reader and keypad offers rapid access to whatever is securely stored. The exterior dimensions are: 10.75"L (top) x 11.75"L (bottom) x 4.25"W and the storage cavity dimensions are 11"L x 8"H x 6"W. A matching driver-side companion is available separately. The safe is offered in black, dark gray, light gray or tan in leatherette or cloth material options.

SHADOW SYSTEMS

(469) 458-6808
shadowssystemscorp.com

Shadow Systems introduces the **THREAD-ON COMPENSATOR** to fit its 9mm models on the MR920, DR920 and XR920 platforms — including Elite, Combat, War Poet and Foundation Series guns. The Thread-On Compensator uses a rock-solid clamping system for attachment, which does not damage the threaded section of the barrel. The conservatively designed port size ensures reliability with full-powered ammunition, and the topside single port limits muzzle blast to the sides of the pistol. The compensator is designed to work with the standard factory weight recoil spring in Shadow Systems' pistols; however, a 15-lb. spring is also available.



Continued from p. 50

BENELLI LAUNCHES PREMIER DEALER PROGRAM

The Benelli Premier Dealer Program is a new initiative by Benelli USA that delivers a positive, consumer-focused in-store experience with leading independent retailers across the country.

This program pairs the most respected shooting sports retailers in the U.S. with an experiential retail floor presentation highlighting the Benelli, Franchi and Stoeger brands. Its centerpiece consists of 90 Benelli brand long guns displayed in a dynamic merchandising format that is high-tech, efficient and visually stands out to educate and inspire consumers.

In addition to the enhanced merchandising experience, the program offers participating dealers enhanced benefits, including product fulfillment, featured exposure on BenelliUSA.com, consumer events and more. The Benelli Premier Dealer Program also combines in-store merchandising with digital and social media in an omni-channel approach to build brand and product awareness through Benelli's top customers.

"Benelli USA could not be more



excited to officially launch our Premier Dealer program as an elevated partnership that strengthens the bond with our top customers nationally," said Lee Colquitt, Benelli USA VP of sales. "By investing in each other, we will

work to grow revenue by combining our best-in-class firearms with best-in-class independent retailers and by incorporating high-level sales and marketing strategies for years to come." [/ benelliusa.com](http://benelliusa.com)

NIOA ACQUIRES BARRETT FIREARMS

Australian defense contractor NIOA has expanded its global reach with the 100% acquisition of Barrett Firearms.

"NIOA's association with Barrett dates back to 2008. We have been inspired by the story of Barrett and admire what Ronnie, Chris and the family have built over more than four decades," said NIOA Group CEO Robert Nioa. "Together we share the same mission — combining our expertise and family business values will ensure Barrett carries on building the finest products in the world."

Nioa confirmed the company would continue to operate under the Barrett brand as a separate division within the NIOA Group alongside NIOA Australia,

NIOA New Zealand, the Australian Missile Corporation and the group's investment in joint venture company Rheinmetall NIOA Munitions.

All management and staff at the Murfreesboro manufacturing facility in Tennessee have been retained and production will continue as normal. Over time it is expected that manufacturing activities in Murfreesboro will be further expanded. Financial terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

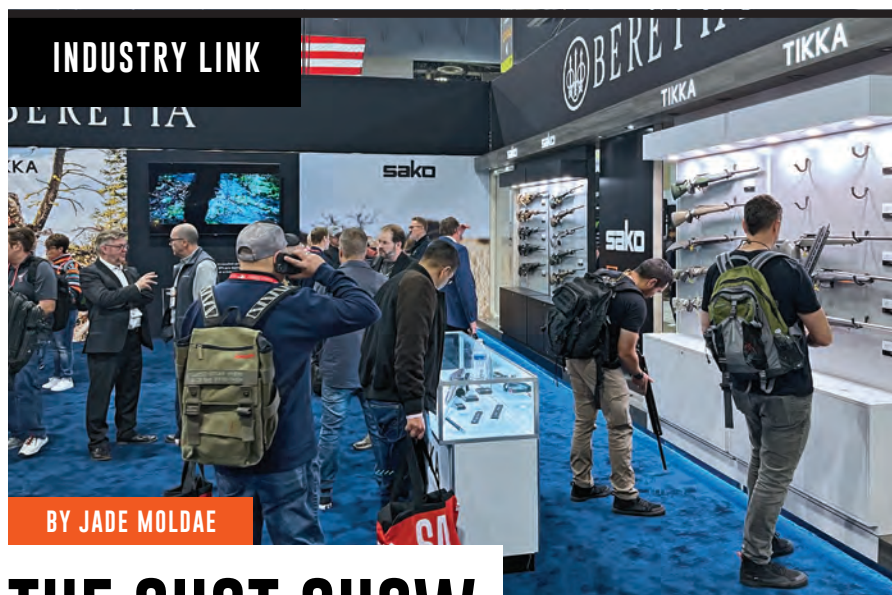
Founder Ronnie Barrett and Chris Barrett will provide ongoing support as executive advisers to the company.

"Today marks the beginning of a new chapter in the Barrett story. Rob and the NIOA team have great respect for the legacy Barrett has created as the leader in long-range precision rifles," said Ronnie Barrett. "It's reassuring to



NIOA Group CEO Robert Nioa announced the company's acquisition of Barrett Firearms during SHOT Show 2023.

know Barrett will be in good hands with a family-owned company that is focused on manufacturing and delivering world-class firearms and munitions to a global network." [/ nioa.com.au](http://nioa.com.au) [/ barrett.net](http://barrett.net)



BY JADE MOLDAE

THE SHOT SHOW “BUZZ” IS BACK

From an attendee perspective, it was always going to be difficult to top the experience from SHOT Show 2022. Less-crowded aisles and ample meeting spaces were great for additional meetings on the fly or being more methodical in searching out new contacts. That said, however, last year's show was missing something — which became immediately apparent on the opening morning of SHOT Show 2023. The SHOT Show “buzz” was missing.

The boisterous energy and palpable excitement from having tens of thousands of industry professionals together in the same place simply can't be replicated on Zoom calls or in social distanced settings. SHOT Show 2023 delivered a concentrated dose of enthusiasm — especially important, amidst the backdrop of the ATF's disappointing ruling on stabilizing braces, fresh attacks on Second Amendment rights (in Oregon and Illinois) and the fear of 2023 being a “down” year for the industry.

In numerous conversations with exhibitors, by and large, they expressed delight at traffic to their booths, optimism for the new year and general relief for a “back to normal” mega trade event. Depending on the category or SKU, supply chain crunches are still taking place and demand has softened (but not across the board — some manufacturers I talked to are forecasting year-over-year

increases in '23). If nothing else, a large-scale event like SHOT Show 2023 served as a timely reminder we're all in this together.

PUTTING 2023 INTO CONTEXT

On Wednesday morning during SHOT week, Jan. 18, I attended the SHOT Show Research Breakfast, which put the current market in context. NSSF, Southwick Associates, NASGW SCOPE and GunBroker.com each provided data and a preview of research to come that will benefit the industry.

Salam Fatohi, NSSF manager of research, previewed upcoming projects that stand to benefit industry businesses. Among them, a firearms magazine ownership estimate from consumers will be key as NSSF seeks to emphasize the “commonly owned” aspect of standard capacity magazines. Other research projects on the horizon include a first-time gun owner perception study, 2023 retailer survey and 2023 range survey.

Rob Southwick of Southwick Associates predicts firearm sales in 2023 will mirror those in 2017 and discounting will be on the rise, as well. (Which dealers are anticipating, too.) In addition, Southwick noted branding will be key for manufacturers this year as during the surge years, consumers bought whatever was available. Inventory levels have improved, giving customers more options. So, Southwick advised

brands need to understand how their perceived by customers and deliver on their expectations to stand out.

NASGW Senior Data Analyst Tom Hopper shared 5 trends to watch for in 2023 — one of them caught my attention, and others sitting next to me. Hopper, through data obtained via NASGW SCOPE CLX and DLX, predicts centerfire ammunition shipments will shrink in 2023 *but will still be double 2019 levels*. This was an underlying point made during the research breakfast: Yes, things are forecasted to be “down” year over year from 2022, but by pre-COVID metrics, the industry is still in a strong position.

GunBroker.com's Tim Lafferty used the passage of Oregon's Measure 114 as a case study to show how swiftly consumer interest in firearms can jump following anti-gun legislation. Analytics observed on GunBroker.com showed interest from women increased significantly after Measure 114 was passed. The data was clear: If your state or locale is prepared to advance anti-gun/anti-industry legislation, get ready for a rush on firearm sales.



If SHOT Show 2023 is anything to go by, there's still a lot of enthusiasm for innovation and uncovering future top-performing brands.

FINAL TAKEAWAYS

If SHOT Show 2023 is anything to go by, there's still a lot of enthusiasm for innovation and uncovering future top-performing brands.

With the potential for a down market in 2023, it will be crucial for retailers and manufacturers alike to “own” their niche this year.

If your store excels at offering the best training in your area, don't be afraid to lean into it and promote it on local advertising channels. If you can offer the best long-range setup to a prospective customer, don't be shy to share customer testimonials. If you have the best frontline team in your area, shine the light on how they've been able to welcome and empower first-time and repeat customers.

Continued on p. 49

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