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BEEN DRAWN

SHOOTING INDUSTRY®

THE INDUSTRY'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE — EST. 1955

\$5 | SEPTEMBER 2022

The Used Gun Market

WHAT TO EXPECT?

E-COMM DEVELOPMENT

Effective, Integrated
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Get Your Sales Team
Back To Selling! **p. 30**

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We pulled out all the stops for this one. The VRF14 is the first semi-automatic short barrel firearm of its kind, and the first American-made release to roll off the line at RIA-USA. It boasts a familiar pistol grip so you can shoot 12GA shells from the hip. Compatible with VR-Series 9- and 19-round mags, this firearm is sure to cause a stir.







VRF14

SKU	CALIBER	CAPACITY	BARREL
VRF14	12GA	5	14"



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SHOOTING INDUSTRY® (ISSN 0037-4148) is published monthly by Publishers' Development Corporation at 225 W. Valley Pkwy., Ste. 100, Escondido, CA 92025. Periodical Class Postage paid at San Diego, CA 92128, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription \$50 yearly in U.S.A. Single copies \$5. Change of address: Four weeks notice required on all changes. Send old address as well as new. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: **SHOOTING INDUSTRY®** P.O. Box 462315, Escondido, CA 92046-9902. **PRINTING SERVICES/PREPRESS:** Democrat Printing Company. **CONTRIBUTORS** submitting manuscripts, photographs or drawings, do so at their own risk. Material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient postage. **PAYMENT** will be made at rates current at time of publication and will cover reproduction in any or all of the editions of **SHOOTING INDUSTRY®**. **OPINIONS** expressed in bylined articles or columns are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the magazine or its staff. Copyright© 2022 by Publishers' Development Corporation. All rights reserved. Reproduction or use of any portion of this magazine without written permission is prohibited.



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50 CEO Bulletin 2022
Innovators
Of the year

The Problem With Record Sales

The early days of the pandemic was something of a godsend to dealers tied up with stale inventory.

But what was supposed to be weeks has turned into months (and now years), which created an entirely new problem for dealers, according to retail guru Hank Yacek.

In “A Crisis In Confidence: Get Back To Selling!” Yacek argues with sustained high levels of demand “the art of salesmanship can go out the window as salespersons become transaction facilitators.”

Make sure your team doesn’t become merely “transaction facilitators” — see **pp. 30-31** for additional insights.

PAID DIGITAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

In the *Best Practices* column, FMG Publications Digital Content and Marketing Director Ashley McGee shared — contrary to popular belief — paid digital marketing campaigns *are* possible for industry businesses. A little creativity, such as “softening ad creative,” can get around barriers set up by Big AdTech platforms.

“The best thing firearm ranges and retailers can do is to try to soften their ad creative and run very vague ‘brand’ campaigns,” said Ashley Hinele, director of customer success at Topple. “Odds of approval increase if their ads don’t contain an image of a firearm and if they don’t reference guns or shooting sports specifically.”

To learn more, see **pp. 28-29**.



SEPTEMBER 2022

THE USED GUN MARKET

“Anytime we start seeing the economy take a downturn we see more trade-ins, which helps us have more used guns to sell,” says Clay Ausley, owner of Fuquay Gun in this month’s feature on the used gun market. An encouraging sign: Ausley hasn’t seen many first-time gun buyers over the past two years coming into his store to return their purchase — which means they could still become a repeat visitor.

For more insights on how to expand in the used gun market, see **pp. 36-39**.

NEXT MONTH: HANDGUNS, CROSSBOWS & MORE

In the October issue, handguns, crossbows, secure storage and knife profits take center stage. The handgun market, in particular, has remained red hot with customers — thanks to continued advancements in optics-ready platforms, “fun” guns and new platforms.

Other highlights of the issue include merchandising accessories to appeal to women, using Instagram Reels to grow your business and tips for using data to make better business decisions. **SI**



FEATURE HIGHLIGHT

“It’s Possible: Paid Digital Marketing Campaigns”

By Ashley McGee

PAGE 28

SHOOTING INDUSTRY

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2022

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BIG BOXES ARE THE PROBLEM

After 32 years, I just gave up ...

I operated my brick-and-mortar outdoor specialty sporting goods store in my commercial building on highway frontage for 20 years with an FFL as a “side business” at that location. I stocked shooting accessories and ammunition, but did the firearms sales by special order only for two reasons:

1. Being outside of town on the highway and having suffered five smash-and-grab burglaries over the years, it was just too much of an enticement for the criminals for me to stock any firearms.

2. More importantly, the retail/sale pricing of common sporting firearms at the big-box stores (Walmart, Sportsman's Warehouse and Fred Meyer [that now, like Dick's, no longer sells firearms or ammunition], etc.) was often less than my wholesale cost.

In my opinion, the manufacturers and distributors who allow/encourage the big-box stores to sell their firearms for 10–15% margins over wholesale are the real culprits! These big-box stores are the ones that have run the retail prices of firearms down to these pathetic margins, not the small stores and home-based FFL dealers.

When I sold my sporting goods business and the new owners moved it into town (without an FFL), I continued to serve my loyal customers for 12 more

These big-box stores are the ones that have run the retail prices of firearms down to these pathetic margins, not the small stores and home-based FFL dealers.

years with NICS checks for a \$15 fee, shipping and receiving firearms to Alaska (to avoid transit issues through Canada), special orders of firearms for “wholesale cost plus freight plus 10%” and case quantities of ammunition and reloading supplies on that same basis — from my highway commercial building. But after a few years, my local Anchorage wholesaler cut me off for ammunition and reloading supplies, apparently because another FFL complained I was “no longer a stocking dealer.”

Then last fall I sold my commercial building and moved my other unrelated

business to my home property. ATF resisted allowing the transfer of my FFL to my home location (without a separate dedicated building), so I gave up. It seems like no one wanted me to continue business except for my customers.

Two other local small FFLs have gone belly up since my decision. There's now only one small gunsmith and one ammunition store left in our community, along with two big-box stores. If the trend continues, it will soon just be the box stores, until they make a corporate decision to abandon the firearms industry.

We should all be working together for a stable, vibrant industry instead of stabbing each other in the back — just sayin'.

— **Walter Ward, Former Owner**
Wild Way Guns, Soldotna, Alaska

“PARIAH” LETTERS STRIKE A CHORD

I just received my first issue of *Shooting Industry* and eight pages in, *Letters To The Editor* struck a chord.

[Nango Arms Co-Owner] Benjamin TenWolde hit the nail on the head (July 2022). I've experienced everything he's said. I'm a small home-based FFL and invested heavily to obtain one of my distributor accounts. I would never do that again.

Essentially, I purchased what I could afford to meet the requirements. At this point, I'm offering them at cost, just to recoup my money. It's much better to buy and pay immediately than to get terms.

And like Benjamin, I, too, have hit brick walls with some distributors because I don't have those “brick walls.” Terms are nice, but hindsight being 20/20, I wouldn't do it again. It's a steep price to pay and still get ignored. Even when you have a high-end item on your “wants list” that's allocated, you get nowhere.

Like other home-based dealers, it's tough to get started and worse to have funds tied up in garbage inventory. I'm not giving up.

— **Michael Miller, Owner**
Fox Hill Transfers, Statesboro, Ga.

HAVE A THOUGHT WHILE READING THE ISSUE?

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

This is my second response to your ongoing article on how small gun stores are “pariah dealers.” I just read “Business Partners For ‘Pariah Dealers’” on ShootingIndustry.com in which an individual names two small-store-friendly distributors. I’d like to point out letting someone fill out a credit application and actually making inventory available to them are two different things.

I’m one of the longest-running FFLs in my area. I keep trying — even as at least three gun stores have come and gone since I started. The reality is: If another person wants to open a gun store across the street from me, the same supplier would sell to them, too. The distributors, for the most part, don’t care if the small store survives.

When a new store opens, their desire is to be a good store and will usually buy several firearms in order to get “Gold Dealer” status. I’ve made these purchases many times myself in order to maintain such status. Each time it was usually followed by a new store opening up just a few miles from me — inevitably taking business away from me. A few years later, they’re out of business. There’s no limit on how many gun stores they’ll supply within a short distance.

To be honest, I wouldn’t have renewed my FFL this past year but my wife wanted me to give it some more time. I’m at the point that if distributors blackball me, I don’t care. Someone needs to help bring accountability. That’s the main reason we got started in the firearms business anyway. It was during a previous presidency several years ago when a \$1,000 AR was going for \$3,000 and a \$12 box of ammo was going for over \$50.

I understand the law of supply and demand and realize people have to make a living, but right is right and wrong is wrong. We’re all Americans and we should be in this together, but it no longer seems that way. Until things change I’ll continue to build my firearms training and martial arts business. Someday, I’ll hopefully find a distributor who wants me to succeed as much as I want them to succeed. Here’s to America. **SI**

— Dave Apel, Owner
New Freedom Enterprises, Moberly, Mo.

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Image: SSSF

GROWTH IN YOUTH SHOOTING SPORTS CONTINUES AT SSSF NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Another record-breaking season was set in July at the 2022 Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) and Scholastic Action Shooting Program (SASP) National Championships. Hosted at the Cardinal Shooting Center in Marengo, Ohio, the annual youth shooting sports competition once again set the mark for the largest shoot in Cardinal Center history. Between the two youth programs, 39 states were represented at the National Championships.

SASP participation continues to grow throughout the nation and had a strong presence at the National Championship. In 2022, SASP broke the record for the

largest action shooting event in the world. With over 2,200 entries, athletes safely fired over 500,000 rounds of ammunition without incident. SCTP participation surged as well, with nearly 3,000 athletes and over 8,000 event entries during the 12-day event schedule. This marks the largest National Championship the SCTP has ever conducted, with over 1.5 million targets being thrown in competition and tens of thousands more being thrown in practice and side competitions.

A staple of additional activities at SCTP Nationals is the Last Competitor Standing or "Annie Oakley" event. This

massive-scale elimination event saw well over 700 clay target athletes lined up across the length of 24 trap fields to determine who would come home with bragging rights and impressive prizes from SCTP sponsors.

SCTP and SASP members benefit from a year-long season, with local, state and regional events culminating in the National Championship each July. As the largest youth shooting sports event in the world, the youth development programs hold industry-wide support, with many sponsors present on site to support the event such as GLOCK, CZ-USA, Browning, Kolar, Beretta, Ruger and more.

In 2022, SASP broke the record for the largest action shooting event in the world. With over 2,200 entries, athletes safely fired over 500,000 rounds of ammunition without incident.

Both programs serve as official youth feeders for the respective sports of USA Shooting. Athletes competing in the international disciplines of the SCTP and SASP often have Junior Olympic and Olympic goals in mind, with the

Continued on p. 12

WINCHESTER AMMUNITION AWARDED DOD CONTRACT ADDITION

Winchester Ammunition was awarded a \$51.8 million modification to an existing contract for manufacturing 5.56mm, 7.62mm and .50-caliber ammunition for the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD).

This second-source contract award

from the DOD is in addition to a recently awarded U.S. Army pistol contract and other ongoing contracts with state and federal agencies.

Winchester has supplied firearms and ammunition to America's military, federal government and law enforcement agencies for more than a century.

"Winchester's employees have built a reputation with its customers that is unrivaled. For decades, we have successfully demonstrated



industry-leading capabilities in quality, innovation and on-time delivery, as well as partnering with multiple agencies in developing solutions that service the U.S. Warfighter," said Brett Flaughner, president of Winchester Ammunition.

The ammunition produced under this contract is manufactured at Winchester's centerfire facility in Oxford, Miss.

/ winchester.com



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INDUSTRY NEWS

Continued from p. 10

youth feeding programs fostering those ambitions with additional opportunities.

In a press release hailing another record-breaking season, the SSSF highlighted the draw of the shooting sports and rise in female participation:

“Shooting sports continues to be a level-playing field where winning can be achieved without being the strongest or the fastest runner. Athletes come from a wide range of backgrounds and some who do not find their place in traditional ball sports often find success in shooting sports, as well as socially.

“Athletes also find enormous success in youth shooting sports, regardless of gender. One out of every three of the programs’ action shooting, international skeet and bunker trap athletes are female, with many out-shooting the males outright for high overall awards. The SASP and SCTP programs focus on team-based youth shooting sports as the catalyst for youth development into high-quality, responsible young adults.”

The Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation (SSSF) is 501(c)(3) public charity responsible for all aspects of the Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) and Scholastic Action Shooting Program (SASP) across the United States.

The SCTP and SASP are youth development programs in which adult coaches and other volunteers use shooting sports to teach and to demonstrate sportsmanship, responsibility, honesty, ethics, integrity, teamwork and other positive life skills. / sssfonline.org / mysctp.com / mysasp.com



Top: Fist bumps all around for Team Young Guns of Quail Creek (Okeechobee, Fla.) while competing in the 2022 SCTP & SASP Nationals. **Bottom:** Mason Kluss (far right), of the Mukwonago Shooting Team (Wis.), won the men’s “Last Competitor Standing” event. He placed second overall in a shootoff with the ladies champion, Ava Downs (Waterford Wolverines [Wis.]). Images: SSSF

JDH CAPITAL ACQUIRES PURE ARCHERY GROUP

Houston-based JDH Capital announced its acquisition of Pure Archery Group, known as Bowtech prior to 2020. Pure Archery Group’s premium brands include Bowtech, Diamond, Excalibur, Black Gold, TightSpot, RipCord and Octane.

“Pure Archery Group is a leading manufacturer of premium archery products, with a reputation for excellence, a dedicated customer base and a history of growth. The addition of Pure Archery to our portfolio is complementary to other

investments we’ve made in the outdoor products industry, and it underscores our confidence in both the company’s many leading brands and the outdoor products industry as a whole,” said Jason C. Rebbrook, CEO of JDH Capital.

Headquartered in Eugene, Ore., Pure Archery is focused on the design and manufacture of durable, accurate high-performance bows, crossbows and archery accessories that are distributed worldwide. The company has operations in Oregon, Montana, Michigan and Ontario, Canada.

“We have always been singularly focused on producing the best archery



products in the world, and that isn’t going to change. With the additional resources and expertise JDH Capital brings to our team, we have never been better positioned to deliver on that promise,” said Rob Kass, CEO of Pure Archery Group.

/ jdhcp.com
/ purearcherygroup.com



FEDERAL AMMUNITION, CHAMPION TARGETS PRESENT 2022 TOM KNAPP SCHOLARSHIPS

Representatives of Federal Ammunition and Champion Targets recently awarded 2022 Tom Knapp Memorial Scholarships to National 4-H Shooting Sports Ambassadors Faith Newton (North Carolina) and William Elrod (Georgia).

Newton (pictured above) and Elrod stood out from the pool of outstanding applicants as leaders, given their numerous volunteer efforts in their local communities as well as throughout their states and regions.

The two scholarship recipients were recognized by Federal Ammunition Conservation Sr. Manager Jon Zinnel (pictured above) at the 2022 National 4-H Shooting Sports Invitational held in Grand Island, Neb., June 26–July 1. This year's event brought together nearly 700 competitors from 39 states to participate in a multitude of shooting-sports disciplines.

"The Knapp Family would be proud of all the National 4-H Ambassadors and their shooting accomplishments. This group does a tremendous job at

sharing the positive effects that the 4-H Shooting Sports Program has had on their lives and communities across the country," said Federal's Brian Kelvington, who helped the Knapp family put together the scholarship program in 2014.

Federal Ammunition continues to be the longest-tenured sponsor for the National 4-H Shooting Sports Program. The program promotes firearm safety and youth development through structured shooting-sports programs across all

shooting disciplines, and serves over 500,000 youth from across the country.

This year marks the seventh time the Knapp scholarships have been awarded to 4-H Ambassadors; there are 14 previous recipients. Applicants for the scholarship must have attended National 4-H Shooting Sports Ambassador training, maintain at least a 3.0 GPA and be enrolled or planning to attend an accredited college or university. / federalpremium.com / championtarget.com



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Henry Repeating Arms President Andy Wickstrom (left) presents a \$50,000 donation to VFW Commander-In-Chief Matthew M. "Fritz" Mihelcic at the 123rd VFW National Convention on July 20, 2022.

HENRY MAKES \$50,000 SILVER ANNIVERSARY YEAR GIFT TO VFW

Henry Repeating Arms donated \$50,000 to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). The gift is part of a million-dollar charitable pledge Henry's CEO and Founder Anthony Imperato made in honor of the company's 25th anniversary.

Henry's president, Andy Wickstrom, made the check presentation to Matthew M. "Fritz" Mihelcic, commander-in-chief of the VFW, during the 123rd VFW National Convention, held in Kansas City, Mo., July 16–21.

"Henry Repeating Arms has been a longtime supporter of organizations that take care of our veterans, and no one does that better than the VFW. We believe in the VFW's mission and vision, and respect its extraordinary accomplishments," Wickstrom told

those in attendance.

In late 2016, Henry Repeating Arms partnered with the VFW to establish a national program that would enhance the fundraising efforts of individual posts. This program has led to direct monetary contributions of more than \$150,000 thus far.

Henry's philanthropic arm, Guns For Great Causes, is distributing the silver anniversary pledge funds. The campaign benefits a wide variety of charities and non-profits. These include children's hospitals and organizations supporting military veterans, first responders, law enforcement, wildlife conservation, hunting and shooting sports education, as well as Second Amendment advocacy groups.

Henry is making a Golden Boy Silver Anniversary Edition rifle available online, with 100% of the sales proceeds benefiting the charities supported by the Guns For Great Causes campaign.

/ henryusa.com

SAAMI ANNOUNCES NEW CARTRIDGE ACCEPTANCE

The Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute Inc. (SAAMI) announced the acceptance of two versions of a new pistol cartridge for SAAMI standardization — Federal Cartridge Company's 30 Super Carry in 100- and 115-grain.

SAAMI creates standards ensuring safety, reliability and interchangeability of firearms, ammunition and components.

Federal's 100-grain 30 Super Carry



FEDERAL 30 SUPER CARRY

bullet travels at a velocity of 1,250 fps, while the 115-grain bullet travels at a velocity of 1,150 fps. Both have a maximum average pressure of 52,000 psi. / saami.org / federalpremium.com

SIG SAUER'S SIG EXPERIENCE CENTER HOLDS GRAND OPENING

SIG SAUER Inc. held the official opening of the SIG Experience Center (SEC) on the campus of SIG SAUER Academy in Epping, N.H., July 15–16.

Various New Hampshire dignitaries, SIG officers and employees and other guests of the company joined President Ron Cohen for the opening ceremony. Also in attendance was Gov. Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas, where SIG SAUER Ammunition manufacturing operations are located.

The company marked the occasion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a full slate of tours, demos and activities held at the center and the academy. The lineup of events also included a live acoustic concert with country artist Brantley Gilbert, as well as appearances from professional sports figures.

The SEC is a state-of-the-art facility bringing the SIG brand to life in a hands-



SIG SAUER President Ron Cohen (center) was joined by other SIG executives and Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson to commemorate the opening of the SIG Experience Center (SEC) in Epping, N.H. The SEC houses the company's flagship store, museum, members-only club and more.

on, immersive way. The center houses the company's flagship store, SIG SAUER Museum, the members-only Club 1751 and a conference and events facility, all in close proximity to the academy.

"Our grand opening celebrations are the start of our commitment to host events and opportunities to bring visitors to the

New England region from all over the world, create new jobs and share the SIG experience," said Cohen.

The SIG Experience Center, located at 231 Exeter Road in Epping, N.H., is open daily from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. / sigsauer.com

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KELTEC ANNOUNCES NEW WYOMING PLANT EXPANSION

KelTec CNC Industries is expanding its production capacity with the acquisition of a 33,000 sq. ft. facility in Rock Springs, Wyo., augmenting its 125,000 sq. ft. industrial space in Cocoa, Fla.

“Wyoming has a rich history as part of the American frontier, and it’s fitting for our brand, being that we constantly explore the limits of performance and design, to expand out here,” said Adrian Kellgren, director of industrial production.

The new facility will focus on cutting-edge manufacturing technology and next-generation research and development. The company’s mission is to increase

production of next-level firearms with enhanced innovation and performance.

“While steady expansion isn’t anything new to us, this is our first expansion into another state, and we couldn’t be more excited about advancing our innovative designs and production processes in Wyoming,” said Derek Kellgren, director of sales and marketing for KelTec.

Company expectations are for the facility to grow its smaller initial manpower investment to 250-plus employees.

KelTec received a warm welcome to its satellite facility from the governor of Wyoming, the mayor of Rock Springs and other local officials.

“In Wyoming, we value our open spaces, recreation and hunting — and



proudly defend our Second Amendment rights. Because of those values and our business-friendly environment, I am pleased to welcome KelTec firearms to Wyoming,” said Gov. Mark Gordon. “The future of our company is tied to the future of the American free spirit,” said George Kellgren, founder, chairman and CEO of KelTec. “Wyoming has been a leading example of liberty and freedom for America, and it is right that we become part of it.” / keltecweapons.com

TALON GRIPS ACQUIRES ARACHNIGRIP

TALON Grips, an industry leader in stick-on gun grips, announced its acquisition of ArachniGRIP, creator of the SlideSpider, a patented, stick-on grip for handgun slides. Both companies are based in Colorado.

Bob Biedenbach co-founded ArachniGRIP after realizing he was having trouble controlling the slide of his firearm because of reduced hand strength and arthritis. Don Hoekendorf, the other co-founder, was a range master who was using TALON Grips. The two men devised a grip for the slide to reduce hand fatigue and improve grasp.

“For years, we have worked with Don and Bob, as our products complement each other nicely. It was a logical step for the brands to join forces. They built a solid foundation, and this is a great opportunity for TALON to use our knowledge and offer the best grip for the slide of the firearm, an area that many people struggle to control,” said Mike Morris, president of TALON Grips.

TALON Grips, founded in 2009, serves the law enforcement, military, competitive and recreational shooting markets. The patented, made-in-the-USA grips provide maximum grip coverage in custom designs for over 300 firearms, making it easier for any shooter to control the firearm and keep the muzzle pointed downrange while clearing or racking the slide.



“You can immediately feel the difference, whether you are a veteran shooter or new to the sport,” Morris added.

The SlideSpider was previously only available as a two-pack for about \$20. TALON Grips is offering these as a single piece for under \$10.

“I am very excited to see where TALON will take this. They are the leader in this space, and have become a household name in firearm grips,” Hoekendorf said. / talongungrrips.com

WOOX INTRODUCES 100 YEARS OF SERVICE PROGRAM

WOOX has introduced a new customer service program: 100 years of free blade sharpening for the company’s knives and axes, and 100 years of free technical assistance for its stocks and chassis.

“WOOX has always provided premium support services for customers and the addition of free blade sharpening is a natural extension of this post-purchase experience,” said Danilo Minelli, WOOX CEO. “Our WOOX Garage consultation

service has been a great success for consumers before they purchase, and 100 years of technical support after the purchase demonstrates the confidence we have in our stocks and chassis.”

WOOX blade sharpening is available for WOOX-branded knives and axes. Chassis maintenance includes a complete material review for worn or damaged parts that may occur during normal use.

Technical consultation, conducted by email, phone or video conference, is available to discuss compatibility, installation, how to use accessories with WOOX products and other related topics.



“If you own a WOOX and don’t have a purchase receipt, no problem. You’re part of the WOOX community and eligible for 100 years of support,” said Chip Hunnicutt, WOOX VP of marketing. “WOOX axes, knives and stocks are the outdoor gear your heirs will fight over, and we’ve made the service transferable so we’ll be there to make sure they are able to get as much use and joy from them.” / wooxstore.com

HORNADY CRITICAL DUTY AWARDED FBI 9MM SERVICE AMMUNITION CONTRACT

Hornady was awarded a Fixed Price Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) agreement with the FBI for its 9mm+P Luger 135-gr. Critical Duty ammunition.

“Having our 9mm+P 135-gr. Critical Duty selected for two consecutive 9mm FBI contracts showcases the hard work and dedication our team puts forward to provide the finest law enforcement ammunition available,” said Scott Javins, Hornady LE/military product manager.

Critical Duty is loaded with the tough Hornady FlexLock bullet that delivers “barrier blind” performance when shot through common urban barriers.

The patented FlexLock bullet incorporates two revolutionary Hornady features, delivering superior barrier

penetration and consistent performance in FBI tactical handgun ammunition tests.

The patented Hornady Flex Tip design eliminates clogging and aids bullet expansion. A large mechanical jacket-to-core InterLock band works to keep the bullet and core from separating for maximum weight retention, excellent expansion, consistent penetration and terminal performance through all FBI test

barriers.

Other features of Critical Duty that make it desirable for law enforcement, such as the FBI, include its bright nickel-plated cases, which simplify chamber checks in reduced light and low-flash, clean burning propellants, which preserves night vision in low-light firing.

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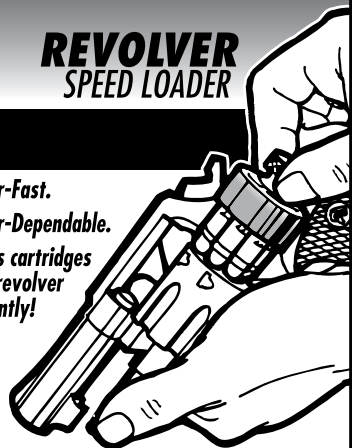
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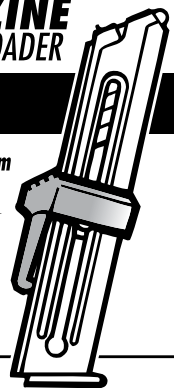
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INDUSTRY NEWS

RUGER SUPPORTS WTTA, SUICIDE PREVENTION

Sturm, Ruger & Co. Inc. announced it has doubled its donation to Walk The Talk America (WTTA), an organization founded in 2018 by Michael Sodini to help reduce or prevent firearm violence and suicides.

WTTA pursues its mission through effective, targeted programs for firearm owners. WTTA's unique approach to the issue of suicide by firearms also encompasses training and outreach to firearms retailers and mental health professionals.

"Partnering with industry leaders like Ruger helps expand our reach, making significant steps toward achieving our mission. The financial support and increased marketing Ruger provides will help us spread our message to a wider audience, which will save lives," said Sodini.

Ruger initially donated \$25,000 in the fall of 2021 to help WTTA raise awareness for its initiatives and bring together industry leaders to create



programs to reduce violence involving firearms.

In June, Ruger President and CEO Chris Killoy doubled down on the company's commitment with another \$25,000 gift. Ruger also plans to incorporate information about Walk the Talk America into every firearm product box by January 2023.

"It is an honor to contribute to (WTTA's) mission of destigmatizing honest conversations about suicide and firearms to help save lives, and we are thankful such an organization exists," said Killoy. / ruger.com / walkthetalkamerica.org

HK VP9-OR EARNS NTOA'S TOP RATING

Heckler & Koch announced the members of National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) have tested the HK VP9-OR pistol and given it a prestigious gold recommendation. This rating is part of NTOA's Member Tested and Recommended program.

NTOA members tested and reviewed the VP9-OR, rating in 13 different categories, including design, performance, ease of use, size, quality, durability, storage, versatility, convenience, application, comfort, accuracy and cleaning and maintenance. To be recommended, products must score at least above average (3.0) in all categories. The VP9-OR's composite score of 4.7 earned a gold recommendation — the highest level possible.

The NTOA is a respected leader in the law enforcement community and these recommendations showcase the potential of a product's usability for all end users,



HK VP9-OR

law enforcement or otherwise.

"We're absolutely thrilled to receive this recommendation from the NTOA," said Jason Whitten, H&K L.E. sales manager. "As a company, we've had tremendous success with the VP9, and this validation from such a respected organization is yet another great chapter in the story of the VP9."

The VP9 family of striker-fired polymer pistols is HK's most popular pistol in the U.S. and with the L.E. community. HK upgraded the VP series in 2020 with the introduction of increased capacity magazines and optics-ready models. / hk-usa.com

SK GUNS REBRANDS WITH NEW NAME, WEBSITE

SK Guns launched a new website dedicated to the company's cross-channel rebranding, and showcasing its new logo. The SK Arms VA and SK Customs brands now fall under the new name, SK Guns.

SK Guns enthusiasts can view the improved product galleries with custom details, and see what is new and available from SK Guns and SK Customs.

A new blog series showcases SK Guns' custom-production firearms and its team of dedicated master engravers, expert finishers, historians and master gunsmiths, as well as the backstory associated with each limited-quantity piece.

"For more than 20 years, we have built first-class, limited-edition, custom firearms. Our customer service experience will continue to remain the same. We are simply creating a new look and feel with

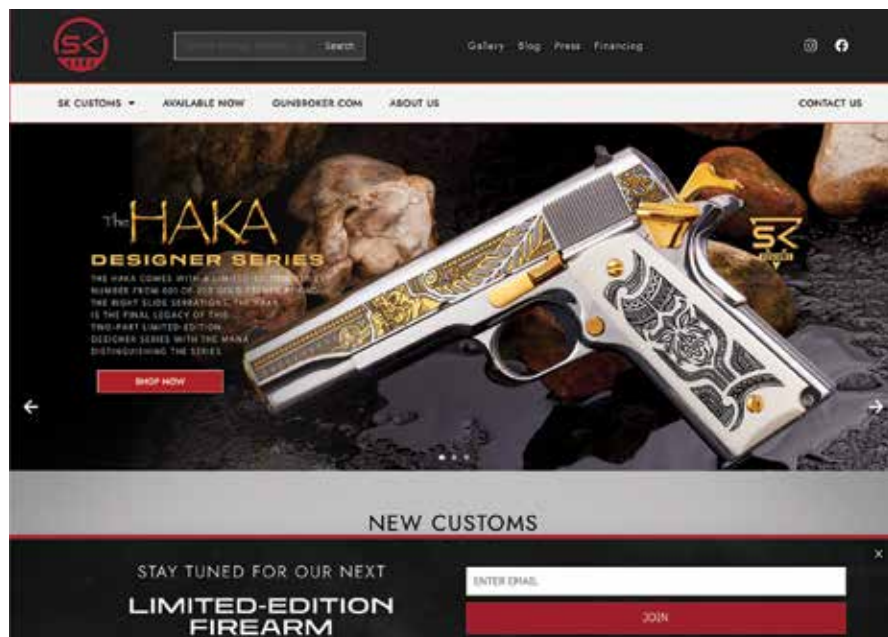
the SK Guns brand in order to take the next step to further deliver our vision on what 'custom, limited-edition,' we believe, means," said Simon Khiabani, owner and founder of SK Guns and SK Customs.

Expanding its brands and available product locations will allow more

opportunities for SK Guns' unique firearms to reach collectors and dealers.

Customers and fans are encouraged to follow the new SK Guns social media channels on Instagram and Facebook.

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



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YOUTH SHOOTING SPORTS ALLIANCE ACCELERATES GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

The Youth Shooting Sports Alliance (YSSA) announced it has restructured its grant application program from an annual to a quarterly process, allowing youth shooting programs to acquire equipment faster.

The YSSA, a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, supports the shooting industry and youth shooting sports across the country by providing quality equipment for youth shooting programs.

Higher demand for equipment from youth shooting sports leaders nationwide necessitated the change. Youth shooting programs can now adjust their equipment requests based on real-time data.

"Equipment grants will continue to be approved based on program length, overall participants, product availability and the viability of each program. As before, we will do everything possible to ensure each program receives as much product as they have requested," said YSSA executive director Cyndi Flannigan.

Some items, such as firearms and archery equipment, are on loan to the programs, while other equipment (hearing and eye protection, targets and similar soft goods) is donated.

"Thanks to generous support from the shooting sports industry, we're well-suited to provide quality equipment to youth programs," Flannigan added. "It's our mission to provide safe, reliable equipment to young shooters so they have a positive experience with the sport."

For a list of items available for both loan and donation, see the grant



application available at www.youthssa.com.

The YSSA, founded in 2007, is an offshoot of the National 4-H Youth Shooting Sports program. To date, the YSSA has loaned and donated equipment to youth programs across the country, benefiting more than 120,000 youth.

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

USA HIGH SCHOOL CLAY TARGET LEAGUE ANNOUNCES 2022 CHAMPIONS

The 2022 USA High School Clay Target League (USAHSCTL) National Championship, featuring 230 teams and 1,800 individual shooters from around the country, announced the two individual champions and one top school team.

The intense clays shooting competition, presented by SCHEELS, was held in Mason, Mich., July 8-10.

Emerging from the field of 400 qualifying individual shooters to claim the national champion title was Aidan McKinney of Rock Creek High School in Kansas. McKinney missed just one target in two days of competition.

Lillian West of North Ridgeville High

School in Ohio missed just three targets to earn her title as the top female high school clay target athlete in the country, a new division this year.

Calhoun High School in Illinois took top team honors from among the 80 qualifying teams for the second year in a row.

The non-profit USA Clay Target League is the largest youth clay target shooting-sports program in the world. Over 43,000 athletes participated in the league during the 2021-2022 school year.

The league offers trap, skeet, sporting clays and 5-stand shooting to secondary and postsecondary schools across the country. It is fully Title IX compliant, with both male and female athletes competing on the same team. It's also an adaptive sport, allowing students with physical disabilities to take part.

The league's priorities are safety,



fun and marksmanship, in that order. Each athlete must achieve firearm safety certification before participation. There hasn't been a single reported injury since the inception of the league in 2001.

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



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BERSA MAKES WTTA BILINGUAL FLYERS AVAILABLE

Bersa, an Argentine firearms manufacturer, has translated Walk The Talk America's (WTTA) mental health awareness flyer into Spanish, allowing the non-profit to expand its message and offer resources for mental health help and suicide prevention to the Latino community.

The flyer is now double-sided, with the front side in English and the back in Spanish. The flyers are being provided to firearm manufacturers and dealers to distribute with each sale. Bersa, with manufacturing both in the U.S. and Argentina, is including the bilingual flyers in all its firearm boxes.

"We are happy to be able to provide this resource for our customers. As someone who was there at the beginning of WTTA, I'm glad that Bersa can continue to contribute and help be part of its evolution," said Rafael Del Valle, director

of U.S. sales and marketing for Bersa.

The U.S. has the second-largest population of Spanish speakers in the world, after Mexico. As much as 13% of the U.S. population speaks Spanish at home, meaning it is the most common non-English language spoken within the U.S. This population merits representation in the industry's marketing efforts, and one of the most pressing messages to get across is the importance of reducing or preventing firearm violence and suicide.

"One of our main goals is to educate and inform people that it is okay to talk about mental health, no matter who they are or what language they speak," said Michael Sodini, WTTA founder. "Conversations can and should happen around firearm ownership, and those conversations shouldn't be blocked due to language barriers."

Through its educational programs, podcasts and training programs, WTTA is paving the way for educating mental health professionals about gun culture and breaking down the negative stigma



around mental health for gun owners. Through their various programs and offerings, WTTA is opening doors throughout the firearms industry and mental health industry.

WTTA also offers an online mental health screening test. Those who take the test will be provided with information, resources and tools to help understand and improve mental health. [/ walkthetalkamerica.org](https://www.walkthetalkamerica.org)



N. LOWE

RUBLINE MARKETING ADDS STAFF

RubLine Marketing welcomed Graphic Designer Nicole Lowe and Digital Marketing Specialist Maddie Inman.



M. INMAN

Lowe will serve RubLine's roster of clients by creating logos and graphics for a variety of media, developing branding guidelines and implementing innovative creative strategies.

Lowe previously worked as a branding and marketing consultant to businesses in a variety of sectors.

Inman will optimize full-scope digital advertising campaigns, develop a variety of creative content and manage social media profiles for RubLine's clients.

She earned a bachelor's in sports public relations from the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) and was a communications and sales intern for UNI's athletic department.



A. LOFASO

STREAMLIGHT INC. ANNOUNCES CHANGES

Streamlight Inc. welcomed Andrea Lofaso as regional manager – west for the company's Industrial/Fire division and announced the promotions of Aaron Freund to director of sales — Industrial/Fire division and Donato Sasso to director — international business development.



D. SASSO

Lofaso will work with independent sales representatives and distributors to increase revenues and expand the West

Coast industrial and fire markets.

She joins the company from Cintas, as well as prior service in the U.S. Air Force.

Freund will develop the annual sales and operating plans for the Industrial/Fire division and direct the activities of its sales and regional managers as well as manufacturer representative agencies and distributor networks.

He joined Streamlight in 2012 as regional sales manager for the division.

Sasso is responsible for developing and executing annual sales strategy, focusing on business growth and extending the reach of Streamlight's products internationally.

Sasso joined Streamlight in 2015 as international regional manager – Latin America.



J. GREELEY

BUCK KNIVES NAMES CFO

Buck Knives named Jon Greeley as the new CFO. Taking the helm of the company's

financial, accounting and IT departments, Greeley will look to leverage his nearly 25 years of experience across multiple industries to further strengthen the iconic Buck Knives brand and its 120+ year knife-making legacy.

"Jon brings the Buck Knives team a strong leader to solidify our financial and infrastructure goals as we look toward the future," said Lane Tobiassen, Buck Knives president.

Greeley was most recently CFO of East West Tea Company (Yogi). He is also a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps.



B. BASIK

PRADCO OUTDOOR BRANDS APPOINTS DIRECTOR

PRADCO Outdoor Brands appointed Brett Basik to director of mergers

and acquisitions. Basik will play a crucial role by leading efforts to acquire new brands and develop new partnerships.

Robert Schoenvogel, PRADCO Outdoor Brands president, stated, "[Basik] will accelerate our business development and acquisition-focused initiatives in this new role on our senior leadership team."

Basik brings a strong background in accounting, investment banking and entrepreneurship to PRADCO.

He earned a B.S. in business administration in accountancy from Auburn University and an MBA from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business. He also served in the Army Reserves.



N. DUBBINI

SAR USA TAPS TERRITORY MANAGER

As SAR USA's new territory sales manager, Nic Dubbini will oversee the growth

and expansion of the company's accounts in his designated territory (Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana and Kentucky) by developing and implementing key strategic incentives.

Mark Scelza, SAR USA national sales manager said, "Nic brings a new, fresh approach to this already highly talented sales team. [The] experience and vision he brings will serve him well in his new role."

Dubbini was born and raised in Italy and now lives in the U.S. He has been involved in the firearms industry since 2017.



M. BROWN

CREEDMOOR SPORTS PROMOTES PURCHASING SPECIALIST

Marcus Brown was promoted to the position of purchasing specialist for

Creedmoor Sports.

"Having someone with both inventory management experience and a strong knowledge of the products and trends within our industry is invaluable for a company like ours," said John Teachey, VP of operations.

Brown joined Creedmoor Sports in 2021 as a technical support specialist. Prior to joining Creedmoor Sports, he spent many years in inventory management and transportation logistics, most recently with Helena Agri-Enterprises.



O. CORTES

PRIMARY ARMS HIRES HR DIRECTOR

Primary Arms welcomed Osvaldo "Ozzie" Cortes to the position of senior director of human resources.

Cortes will undertake new projects to

advance the business' service provision and elevate company culture.

Marshall Lerner, founder and CEO of Primary Arms, shared, "[Cortes'] experience and professional accomplishments made him the ideal candidate for the position, and we look forward to implementing his strategies as we build on our team-driven culture."

With over 20 years of experience in strategic human resources leadership, Cortes is an accomplished talent management professional with extensive expertise from both domestic and international operations.



S. MARKS

CSSI GROWS TEAM

Chattanooga Shooting Supplies Inc. (CSSI) announced the hire of Sandra Marks, an experienced procurement

professional, and Sales Rep Charlie Belknap Hauan (not pictured).

Marks joins CSSI with more than eight years of experience providing data and analytics skills to manage multimillion-dollar purchasing budgets.

"Sandra brings a strategic focus on developing new supply chains, continued growth of vendor partnerships and sophisticated analysis," said Ron Staffieri, CSSI president/CEO.

Belknap Hauan has experience as a sales representative at both the manufacturer level and distribution channel.

"Charlie will help strengthen our presence across multiple channels. We are excited to have her on the team to support our continued growth and national presence," Staffieri shared. **SI**

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Image: Walther Arms

AND THE “F” STANDS FOR ...

The recent introduction of the Walther PDP-F pistol is seen largely on the gun-related internet as “a handgun for ladies.” Designed with a short reach of the index finger to the trigger — and for less pressure to be required to retract the slide to the rear and charge the handgun — it certainly fits the profile.

I sit here now at my keyboard, with a Walther PDP-F pistol on my desk — 9mm, 3.5" barrel, two 15-round magazines complete with a mag-filling tool. The PDP designation stands for Performance Duty Pistol. The “F” suffix stands for ... um ... well, let’s talk.

I’ve just returned from an afternoon at the range with a focus group that encompassed male and female, small to large and ages from 20s to 70s.

Without exception, everyone who shot the PDP-F liked it, and therein lies a “Tale related to sale.”

“F” IS FOR FEMALE

Every gun dealer has run across the female customer who wants a semi-auto pistol but has trouble working the slide. It’s a simple act: On average, women have less upper body strength than men of the same height. Walther focused

on this with the PDP-F. Consider the following features.

A claimed 20% reduction in effort required to rack the slide — the redesign which makes this possible includes a two-piece striker.

Lengthened, ambidextrous slide stop levers — these make it easier for shorter digits to lock the slide open during both training and routine administrative handling.

Great big slide-grasping grooves provide better hand traction — bearing in mind a petite female’s fingers will be about one digit shorter in overall length than those of an average size male, unusually short trigger reach is a hallmark PDP-F feature (as is the surprisingly slim grip circumference considering the pistol’s 15-round magazines).

The PDP-F is set up to mount a carry optic — which gives additional leverage for activating the slide.

Finally, a ledge-configuration rear sight is present — which can be “hooked” on the edge of belt or holster to retract the slide one-handed, a universally applicable combat feature for worst case “wounded defender” scenarios.

◀ The Walther PDP-F pistol has a number of features that will not only apply to women, but also those with arthritis or weakened hands. With an easy-to-rack slide and 15+1 capacity in 9mm, it should have widespread appeal.

And, of course, it has the easy trigger pull for which striker-fired Walthers have become justly famous. (Curiously, the flare at the rear of the slide, introduced by Taurus a few years ago and seen on the HK VP9 and some other pistols, is not present on the PDP-F.)

Walther’s marketing thrust is definitely toward the female sector. On the landing page promoting this new pistol on Walther’s website (waltherarms.com/pdp-f-series), the company has some very short — and very effective — videos on this pistol done by top female instructors in the field, such as Tatiana Whitlock. If you have a TV playing in the background in your shop, consider downloading these!

That said, though, the F-Series won’t appeal to *just* the female market.



Look at the hands of your customer. If they appear to be twisted out of shape, steer them toward a pistol like the PDP-F.

“F” IS FOR FOGGY

Yes, I’m old — so this gives me license to say the (other) F-word: “Fogey.”

I started shooting semi-auto pistols at age 9 or 10, and 1911s at age 12. At this writing, I’m 73 ... and have suffered from arthritis for more than half of my life. I’m one of your many potential customers who appreciate a semi-auto pistol expressly designed to make it easy to run the slide.

A sales tip here: *Look at the hands of your customer.* If they appear to be twisted out of shape, steer them toward a pistol like the PDP-F. They’ll thank

you for giving them something that works for them, and your accountant will thank you for what you've added to your shop's bottom line.

"F" IS FOR *FOULED-UP HANDS*

The grandmother had recently injured the thumb of her non-dominant hand; the hand that runs the slide. She racked the PDP-F and said delightedly, "It's easy!"

“

Weakened hands are not the exclusive province of age or gender.

One of the septuagenarian males said, "Yup, runs easy." The other — me — didn't find it quite as easy as some others in the same product category, but certainly didn't have trouble with it.

Weakened hands are not the exclusive province of age or gender. Whether it's an elderly hand, an arthritic hand or an injured hand, there are a great many of your customers out there who can't "rack the slide of a semi-auto" as briskly as a young Marine recruit at Parris Island. Keep in mind: Any customer of any gender who fits this profile is a candidate for a semi-auto pistol with an easy-to-run slide!

Look how well Smith & Wesson's EZ series has sold playing on its cardinal feature, ease-of-slide operation. The PDP-F's feature set takes this concept one more step forward, and does so with a 15-round magazine capacity and a competitive price.

Once its features are explained to the clientele above, you can expect the Walther PDP-F to be rotating quickly from showcase to sales desk. **SI**



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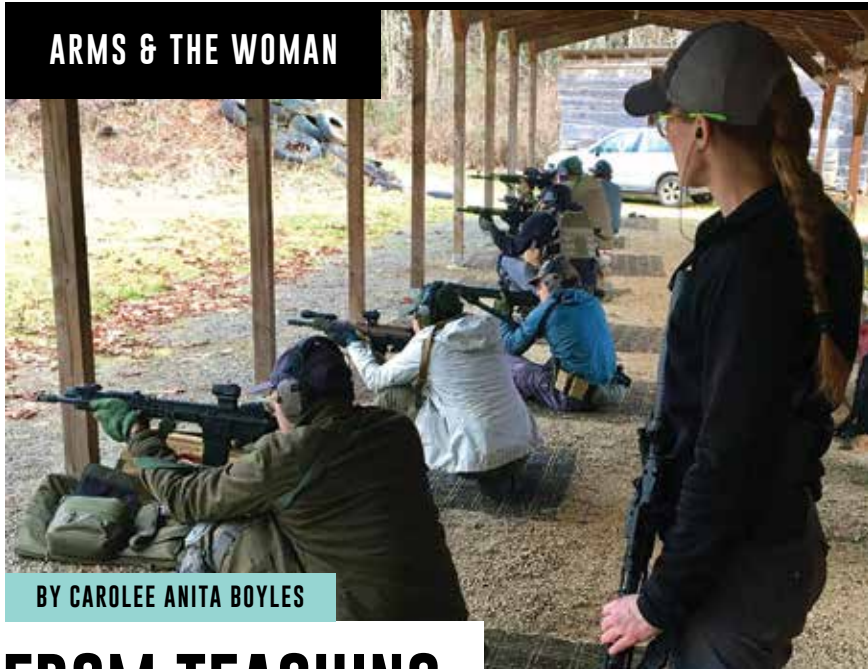
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ARMS & THE WOMAN



BY CAROLEE ANITA BOYLES

FROM TEACHING TO OWNING A RANGE

Belle McCormack didn't start out wanting to own a shooting range. But when a series of events propelled her into firearms instruction, and then opportunity opened a door in front of her, she didn't hesitate to step through it. Today she owns and manages The Firearms Academy of Seattle in Onalaska, Wash.

McCormack had a passing relationship with firearms as a child, but — in her words — it certainly wasn't extensive. More important to McCormack's development as a firearms instructor is she's a domestic violence survivor.

"My entry into the industry is really similar to the majority of women who pursue self-defense," she said. "I was just looking for a way to get the confidence and the competence to make the decisions and exercise the skills I might need to use to save my life."

This is what led McCormack into formal training.

"From there, I figured out all the things I was doing wrong with concealed carry, and I made all the dumb mistakes everybody else did," she noted. "Once I started getting really deep into it, my mom said I was really paranoid, but it was making me feel so much better and I wanted to keep doing it. This was when

I realized I could do what I'd already done with every other job I'd had in my adult life — which involved teaching or training."

PURCHASING THE ACADEMY

McCormack has worked in some sort of education for more than 20 years.

"I've been a doula, a retail training manager and a drama teacher," she shared. "I've always done teaching or training of some type."

For a couple of years, McCormack was the volunteer range master at the Jefferson County Sportsmen's Association in Port Townsend, Wash. At the same time, she sometimes helped out at Arms Pro, also in Port Townsend. Then in 2016, McCormack began teaching some classes at The Firearms Academy of Seattle, where she was an apprentice instructor and later an instructor. After a year, she moved to a full-time position as operations manager.

"By the third year, Marty [Hayes] — the owner — wanted to retire and I was starting to run a lot of stuff," she recalled. "As soon as I came on full-time as one of the lead instructors, Marty started to filter his way out. I was pretty much handling the day-to-day operation of the entire business."

◀ Belle McCormack (right) oversees the firing line on one of The Firearms Academy of Seattle's 14 ranges.

Hayes stepped back by "unofficially" retiring at the end of 2019. By 2021, McCormack and Hayes had come to an agreement about how she would take over and purchase the business, but it took another year for attorneys to formalize the purchase.

"The end result, when I actually became the owner, was very anti-climactic," McCormack stated. "Marty and I both felt, 'Well, we did this a year ago when we shook hands.'"

A COUNTER PHILOSOPHY

McCormack talks tough about women-only training for self-defense. Her philosophy on training runs counter to what many women instructors promote in their classes.

"I know this is going to be an unpopular opinion, but in general, I think women-only training is a detriment to women because it breeds a false confidence," she said. "It also keeps them at a kindergarten level. There's no advanced women-only training available. And if you break it down, the majority of women who get into firearms for self-defense are in it because either something has already happened to them, or it's happened close enough to them they know it's a reality."

A woman is not likely to be attacked by another woman, McCormack pointed out, so they need to train in an environment where they are learning the same skills at the same level as men.

Another point McCormack made comes from her own experience during the healing process: If a woman is not attached to her victimhood — but is instead focused on getting back to some semblance of normal for herself — she needs to go where good men are to know what good men look like.

"When you talk about the caliber of people you run into in this industry, where is there a better opportunity for women to take the same class as everybody else?" she asked. "Women shouldn't start out handicapped, which is what I have seen a lot of the time with women-only classes."

A FOCUS ON THINKING

McCormack said The Firearms Academy of Seattle is much more than just her: it's run by a whole team of

instructors who bring many skills to the table.

"I'm not a lead instructor here," she acknowledged. "I have a team who supports me. My place couldn't do what it does without everybody — it's my team."

The goal of the team, according to McCormack, is *not* to teach people how to shoot.

"We teach people how to think and make decisions with guns in their hands," she asserted. "Our focus is the legalities and the violence dynamics and the thought process; it's not bullets on paper. That's my passion about it; we have to learn to think better."

What McCormack teaches is essentially egoless survival skills.



The majority of women who get into firearms for self-defense are in it because either something has already happened to them, or it's happened close enough to them they know it's a reality."

Belle McCormack, Owner & Manager,
The Firearms Academy of Seattle, Onalaska, Wash.

"Ego has no place in survival," she stated. "Violence dynamics are a huge part of it. The gun is just one tool in the overall survival plan."

McCormack offers a wide variety of courses for civilians, military and law enforcement.

"We run pistol, rifle and shotgun from beginner to intermediate and advanced classes," she informed. "In the advanced classes, we do scenario training, force-on-force and decision-making drills. We have a long-distance rifle range and a low-light shoot house."

Aside from self-defense training, the Academy runs monthly IDPA matches from February through October and has classes for competitive shooters.

The Academy covers 40 acres and

houses 14 different ranges, including the low-light shoot house, a 360-degree shoot house and a 600-yard rifle range.

One relationship McCormack is particularly proud of is the one with a local school.

"Over the past couple of years, our local high school has visited a few times each year for a handgun safety class with us," she shared. "The shop teacher did most of the work; I was just the person who could accommodate them. They do a full introduction to handguns class, with safety, legal lecture and 50 rounds of live-fire. Since it's basically unheard of these days, I'm amazed and thankful they get to come."

RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME


When it comes to buying and taking over a range, McCormack recognizes she happened to be in the right place at the right time, working the hardest, with the right level of motivation.

"Everything I've managed to do has been because of tremendous amounts of help from a lot of really amazing people I've been lucky enough to run into," she shared. "This industry is full of people like that. The nature of what we do leads to a certain set of moral codes that cross cultural boundaries and bring us all together."

As far as the future is concerned, McCormack doesn't have any big plans to change anything at the range.

"One of the main things I teach my students is to not let ego get involved in your decision-making process," she affirmed. "I think this applies to more than just self-defense. I'm looking to be sustainable more than I am 'successful.'"

In short, McCormack's following the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it approach" — while staying nimble.

"While there have been changes in the curriculum, the structure of the Academy was bestowed upon me. It's a 30-year-old business with an awesome reputation; I got really lucky," she said. "All I have to do is keep it running and doing what it's been doing all along and continue to evolve to please our customers and our students, and to be on the edge of what's relevant and valid in training." 

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BY ASHLEY MCGEE

IT'S POSSIBLE: PAID DIGITAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

IT should come as no surprise the digital marketing sector has continued to experience rapid growth. In 2021, the total U.S. digital advertising spend grew by 21.6% year-over-year to total \$436.3 billion — \$77.4 billion more than the annual spend in 2020.¹ Comparatively, offline media spending grew by 7.6% over 2020 to total \$196 billion. This means more than half of all advertising was digital (55%). Of this, Facebook accounted for over a quarter of all digital ad spending, right behind Google (28.9%) and surpassing Amazon (10.3%).

This year, digital advertising expenditures are projected to increase by 5.5% to \$460 billion.² So how are ranges and retailers supposed to compete when Big Tech's advertising and community guidelines explicitly prohibit ads for firearms and nearly all firearms-related products?

According to its ad policy, Google wants to “help keep people safe both online and off, so we don’t allow the promotion of some products or services that cause damage, harm, or injury.”

With the exception of “gun parts and associated items that increase the safety of a gun” such as gun locks, trigger locks, safety pins and chamber blocks, Google prohibits the promotion



ASHLEY HINELINE



BRIAN AITKEN



DAN KAHN



JEFF DILLOW

of explosives (including fireworks), guns, gun parts and related products, and other weapons (including knives, tasers, pepper spray, etc.). The other members of the Big Five (Apple, Microsoft, Meta and Amazon) each have similar language in their policies.

REDUCE YOUR RISK

“If trying to run their ad campaigns through Big AdTech platforms like Google and Facebook, the best thing firearm ranges and retailers can do is to try to soften their ad creative and run very vague ‘brand’ campaigns,” said Ashley Himeline, director of customer success at

Topple — a venture-backed digital advertising exchange connecting advertisers with millions of customers across America every single day.

“Their odds of approval increase if their ads don’t contain an image of a firearm and if they don’t reference

guns or shooting sports specifically,” she added.

Of course, there’s only so much a range or retailer can do to “soften their ad creative” and businesses have to decide whether the potential return is worth the effort — or whether they want to contribute to the profits of platforms that actively work to censor their entire industry, regardless of whatever the return on investment may be.

ALTERNATIVE AD EXCHANGE

“While it’s still possible to find success advertising across major ad platforms, especially Google Search Engine Marketing if ranges and retailers can manage to get their campaign approved and launched, ranges and retailers should strongly consider running geo-targeted campaigns on firearms-friendly ad exchanges like Topple,” said Brian Aitken, founder and CEO of Topple. “They won’t have to self-censor their ad creative, their costs will likely be much less expensive and they can run many ad formats they’re already accustomed to like display, video and native ads. They’ll also enjoy many of the same targeting opportunities like geography and interests, including the ability to target those who have indicated an interest in firearms.”



To get the sales, you need to build awareness, loyalty and credibility — which can all be done without paid search or social media campaigns.”

Jeff Dillow, Account Director, *TREAD Agency*

Topple allows brands to advertise anything legal, from guns to ammunition or crypto to cannabis. Their guidelines are simple — if it’s legal in the jurisdiction it’s being advertised, and the publishers in their exchange have opted-in to receive ads from your industry, then those ads will be served to your

target audience.

“As far as I know, Topple is the only ad exchange built on the principles of both free speech and freedom of association. Meaning, brands have a right to say whatever they want in their ads — which the Supreme Court has held is constitutionally protected speech,” said Aitken. “But, publishers also have the right to say they don’t want to associate themselves with certain industries. So far, over 96% of publishers across our exchange have chosen to allow ads from the firearms industry.”

Topple does this by working with a wide range of publishers from Blaze Media to AR15.com that run ads often alongside ads from other demand partners like Google.

Google even partners with ad exchanges that appear to operate using a different set of guidelines than its Google Ads Policy, which only applies to its own network and properties such as YouTube. Although they continue to boast about how not accepting gun ads is a reflection of the company’s values and culture, they continue to receive a slice of revenue from firearms companies that advertise through their partner networks. In fact, using such a loophole allowed the company to publicly claim it has a no-gun policy while facilitating the placement of — and earning money from — more than 100 million gun ads each year.³

MAINTAIN YOUR ORGANIC PRESENCE

Many ranges and retailers, especially small- to mid-size businesses with very limited resources, grow so frustrated with all the digital media red tape they consider abandoning it as part of their marketing strategy altogether. But with an estimated 5.6 billion Google searches each day and 3.84 billion monthly active users across Meta’s family of apps (Facebook, Instagram, Messenger and WhatsApp), having a digital presence isn’t optional for those seeking to attract new customers and reach key growth demographics like women and minorities.

“You can still have a robust organic presence as long as you aren’t directly selling,” said Jeff Dillow, account



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For every \$1 spent on a pay-per-click advertising campaign, such as through Google or Facebook, the average return on investment is \$2. But email marketing returns \$36 for every \$1 spent.

director of TREAD Agency, which primarily provides digital marketing services for shooting sports, fishing, boating, overland, off-road and other outdoor-market segments.

For those questioning why they should invest time into social media and digital marketing if they can’t overtly sell their products or services, Dillow had this to say: “To get the sales, you need to build awareness, loyalty and credibility — which can all

be done without paid search or social media campaigns.”

USE FIRST-PARTY DATA

With an increased focus on consumer privacy and data protection, digital marketing is growing more complex than ever. Businesses must not only comply with legislative policies such as the California Consumer Privacy Act, but also keep up with the ever-changing platform policies like Google’s forthcoming end of third-party cookie tracking and Apple’s new Mail Privacy Protection.

“What we’re seeing is a tidal change in how digital marketing works,” said Dan Kahn, president of TREAD Agency. “First-party data is more important than ever.”

First-party data is information a company collects directly from its customers and owns, such as email addresses, mailing addresses and phone numbers.

“Up until now, we’ve seen brands pour massive amounts of resources into building these huge presences, but they’ve done so on platforms they don’t own or control which can be taken away in the blink of an eye,” he continued. “We’ve seen it happen time and time again, especially for those whose businesses fall under restricted ad categories like the firearms industry.”

Continued on p. 48



Crisis In Confidence

GET BACK TO SELLING!

BY HANK YACEK

There's no debate: Salesmanship is a perishable skill. The ability to engage with a customer and close a profitable sale is something that must be learned and honed over time. Without constant practice, the level of salesmanship dramatically diminishes.

When demand for products hits record-setting

highs, the art of salesmanship can go out the window as salespersons become transaction facilitators. This is exactly what many stores have experienced over the past two years. So, what do we do about this? Get back to selling!

THE WORST TYPE OF TRANSACTION

During the past two and a half years, the level of demand saw most stores struggling to keep relevant inventory in stock. When they did, it would evaporate off the shelves and often end up being a single-item transaction. Single-item transactions are the least profitable transaction for a store.

To do some basic math, if we consider payroll expenses constitute 16% of our gross

revenues, it means we immediately lose 16 points of margin on the single item we sold. For accessories, this means we lose half of our total profit margin before even considering any other business expenses. (That's right — *half*.)

However, if we can simply add one more item to a transaction — like selling a second box of the same ammunition instead of just one — we can lessen the negative impact of payroll on profits.

Another way to think about this is to focus on the productivity levels your sales team delivers in the shortest amount of time. If we can do this, we can lower the negative impacts payroll has on our profitability.

ADJUST YOUR FOCUS

This is where selling skills deliver! During the pandemic, the biggest problem a customer had, that a store could solve, was simply having the product in stock.

At the end of the day, the goal of what any retail store should be focusing on is solving customer problems. Selling products and/or services is the dividend of the process and should never be the focus. You read that right: The focus shouldn't be on selling products or services.

This is a problem many stores are currently facing. Their sales team has become so used to the transactional environment of selling products to customers one product at a time, they're continuing this behavior in an environment where stores are much better inventoried.

Over the past six months, I've traveled extensively around the country visiting stores along the way and engaging with their sales teams. The most common outcome in my interactions with team members was their sole focus on the one item that "brought me by today." They'd simply ring me up and send me on my way.

Hardly anyone even asked me what use I had planned for the item I purchased. Was the box of 9mm

ammo being used for my Prepper hoard, range day at my farm, a gift for a friend or whatever possible end use I might have had for it?

If our team starts asking questions focused on understanding the goals of our customers — instead of the products — we can easily discover what they are trying to achieve. Once we know their plans, goals or expectations of their journey, we're able to open up the conversation to more products we can add to the sale because it might solve their problem better (or go beyond) and even find solutions to problems the customer might not know they have.

ENCOURAGE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

At the core of all this is sales team members need to start asking more experience and/or goal-oriented questions to customers. We do this by asking open-ended questions such as, *"Hi Mr. Smith, great to see you today! What are you up to this weekend?"* or *"Dr. Jones, what is it about this pistol that interests you the most?"* and then listening closely to their response to help prompt us to either ask more questions or suggest more products that help the customer achieve their goals.

A simple way to judge whether a salesperson is heading down the right path is to generalize how much

the customer is talking compared to how much the salesperson is talking. The split should settle somewhere around 80/20, where the customer is doing 80% of the talking. If we stick to this rule it forces us to ask good, open-ended questions.

In this approach, our customer gives us lots of valuable information about their product preferences, goals or any other factor that will influence their purchasing journey. Once we have this wealth of knowledge about our customer's needs it lets the salesperson lean on their expertise of products and services and suggest the best-fit solutions for the customer. Note: I said "products and services" — not just one item.

It's incredibly rare when a customer truly only needs one product. It's like someone going to a hardware store and buying a drill; they likely also need bits, extra batteries, fasteners, grommets, anchors or a plethora of other related items (many of which they may not know they need to complete their project).

WE ALL WANT THE SAME THING

All told, now that customers are back to more normal purchasing patterns, products becoming more available and margins normalizing, it

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becomes imperative we get our sales teams back on a path of engaging with customers at a different level than we have seen for the past few years. This becomes especially timely with the increase in payroll costs in hiring quality employees. To stay profitable, we must improve sales productivity.

Stores need to make this transition sooner than later to avoid sacrificing its customer base to its competitor who does. It takes *you* to train your team, encourage them to ask questions and get customers talking as much as possible. If the sales team can do this, you'll see increased profits, happier customers and your store benefiting from improved customer loyalty. Isn't that what we all want? **SI**



Dave Tobel of Capital Sports (Helena, Mont.) knows his customer base well enough that when a vintage Springfield Armory 1911-A1 or 100-year-old Mauser Model A Sporter in 8x57 comes in, he can call in an interested customer and close the sale.



At The Starting Line

Use E-Commerce To Drive More Sales

BY TIM BARKER

During their first five years in business, the owners of Legacy Indoor Range & Armory were happy with a homegrown website. For the most part, it did what it needed to do: It made sales here and there, and it gave the small shop in Cinnaminson, N.J., an online footprint.

Then came COVID and a chaotic mix of developments that turned the industry, along with the rest of the world, on its head. Swamped with orders, they made a difficult decision.

"The website was almost impossible to maintain with how fast inventory was changing," said Melissa Deeney, Legacy co-owner. "We basically stopped all

e-commerce. I mean everything, including the website and GunBroker.com. We just couldn't keep up with it."

Now with a bit of breathing room, the shop is venturing back into e-commerce, but with a different approach. They recently signed on with Gearfire, one of several firms with website services geared toward gun stores.

Legacy's new online site provides a real-time look at the shop's inventory, while also providing customers access to offerings from a dozen or so distributors.

The company's journey offers a glimpse into an ongoing trend in an industry that's been reluctant to wholly embrace e-commerce. Coming out of the COVID pandemic, more shops are turning a more serious eye toward online sales.

THE PANDEMIC & A NEW GENERATION'S IMPACT

Celerant Technology is another

firm offering e-commerce services, as well as point-of-sale technology to the industry. In the days before the pandemic, about 60% of the company's new dealer customers were interested in the e-commerce component. Today, this figure is 95% or more, according to Michele Salerno, Celerant director of marketing and assistant VP.

"I think even prior to COVID, the industry was evolving at a rapid pace whether the retailers liked it or not," Salerno noted. "Going through two years of COVID craziness just escalated it."

Also contributing to the trend is what might best be described as a changing of the guard in gun store ownership. Around the country, parents are turning stores over to their children who have a different take on the value of the internet as a sales tool, said Chad Seaverns, Gearfire's chief operating officer.

"We're seeing a lot of younger firearms dealers, either because of generations turning over or just younger people starting new businesses," Seaverns said. "They know the importance of being online, whereas some of the boomer generation feel like they've done perfectly fine all these years without a website."

Among this newer generation of owners is Paul Toth, who opened TAAP Outdoors in Wakeman, Ohio, after leaving law enforcement in 2016. He also tried his hand at developing his own e-commerce platform before becoming frustrated and turning to Celerant.

"If you want to stay in the business, you're going to have to do e-commerce," Toth argued. "And you have to efficiently ship stuff. People want it quick. Everybody expects every store to be like Amazon."

JUST BUILDING IT DOESN'T MEAN THEY WILL COME

Toth also quickly realized there's a lot more to developing a successful e-commerce presence than simply signing up with companies like Celerant or Gearfire.

"It doesn't work like that. You have to work on it," Toth shared. "I sit here in the mornings and I click around the website to see if there are broken links or something that's not jiving with what's actually here."

There also are things you can do with your site — particularly if you're using a company that provides templates — to make it more valuable. Both Celerant and Gearfire offer the ability to do customization. Store-specific inventory can be added to allow shops with a particular niche to promote those products. Used guns can be listed. Photos can be uploaded. Descriptions can be edited.

"Do a lot of dealers actually go in and do it? No, because they don't have time," Salerno contended. "Do the more innovative dealers do it? Absolutely."

There's one very important reason to do as much customization as possible. It all comes down to search engine optimization (SEO). It's what search engines like Google take into account when online users are browsing. Unique sites are more likely to be ranked higher in search results.

"When every single site looks exactly the same and has the same website copy, from an SEO perspective, you can't get much worse than that," Salerno said.

Even if you don't have the time to churn out a unique website, there is still value in having an online presence, Seaverns argued.

If you go with an unmodified template, it will make some sales here and there. But more importantly, it secures your real estate in cyberspace. Without it, you

risk losing out on potential customers.

"It's no longer an option not to be online," Seaverns asserted. "It's how consumers start their shopping experience."

REAL-TIME UPDATES

For both of these gun shops, plans to use homegrown sites were derailed, at least partially, by inventory issues — specifically, making sure online inventory matched what was actually in the store.



If you want to stay in the business, you're going to have to do e-commerce. And you have to efficiently ship stuff. People want it quick. Everybody expects every store to be like Amazon."

Paul Toth, Owner
TAAP Outdoors
Wakeman, Ohio

Without it, you may be refunding online sales that can't be backed up with what is actually on the shelves. Or customers will be driving to your store to buy something you don't have.

"If it's not here when they get here, it leaves a bad taste in anybody's mouth," Toth remarked.

To avoid this, you'll need a feature showing customers what's physically in the shop, as opposed to what's available through your distributor networks — the so-called "endless aisle" of products you would never have enough room to stock.

Both Celerant and Gearfire, for example, allow shoppers to filter search results to show what's in the store — or a specific store if the business has multiple locations.

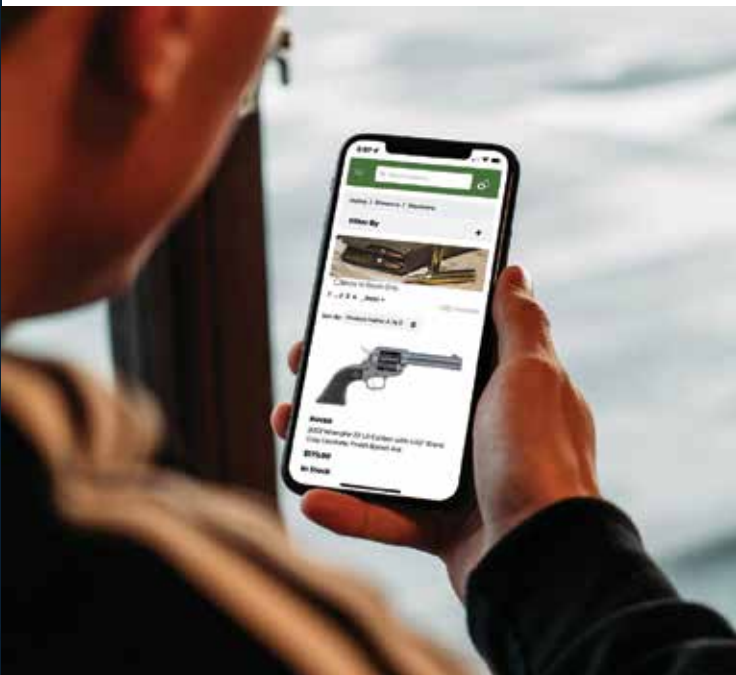
Even with these protective features, Deeney said they still urge customers (through a website message) to call to verify availability. They also suggest buying the item from the website before heading to the store to pick it up. It functions like a reservation.

"This gives us the opportunity to secure the item," she shared. "If for some reason the website is wrong, and we don't actually have it, we can notify them before they make the drive."

SOMEONE TO OWN IT

Another key to success is making sure one employee, rather than everyone, is responsible for your e-commerce operation.

"We see more success with retailers who have someone dedicated to the site, or having someone basically 'own' the channel," said Seaverns with Gearfire.



In just a couple simple actions on a smartphone, visitors to TAAP Outdoors' site can see what firearms are in stock and narrow their search to find popular models like the Ruger Wrangler with a gray Cerakote finish.



Top: With sales slowing down from the pandemic/social unrest-fueled breakneck pace, Legacy Indoor Range & Armory is in the process of revamping its website through Gearfire. **Bottom Left:** Legacy Co-Owner Melissa Deeney and Andrew Proctor encourage customers to call to confirm the availability of a particular item before coming in — which alleviates the potential of it being purchased ahead of their arrival by someone else. **Bottom Right:** Paul Toth, owner of TAAP Outdoors, cautioned against rushing into a complete overhaul of an e-commerce website. “You can’t just change these on a whim,” he advised. “It’s not just flipping a switch.”

Toth is planning for this down the line as business grows. He envisions having someone spend somewhere around 60% of their time on e-commerce and the other 40% on general store inventory. This person would be responsible for shipments, pulling orders, securing FFLs for gun shipments, handling site updates and posting unique items.

“When you’re out doing the registers, you can’t keep up with everything,” Toth noted. “I wouldn’t want someone trying to handle orders in-between customers.”

PICKING A RELIABLE PROVIDER

For any gun shop considering its e-commerce future, one of the most important factors is the commitment of your chosen

provider, particularly in an era when corporations aren’t shy about distancing themselves from guns at a moment’s notice.

Consider what happened after 2018’s decision by Shopify to sever ties with customers selling semi-automatic firearms. And in 2019, business software firm Salesforce announced it would no longer allow its products to be used for

selling semi-automatic guns and various accessories.

“The most important thing to always keep in mind is your provider supports the firearms industry now and will continue to do so for the long haul,” advised Salerno, with Celerant.

It was something both Deeney and Toth took into account when choosing their respective e-commerce partners. Toth talked about the year’s worth of time he invested in choosing and preparing for his new e-commerce site.

“You can’t just change these on a whim,” Toth concluded. “It’s not a simple thing. It’s not just flipping a switch.” **SI**

“
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Michele Salerno, Director of
Marketing & Asst. VP
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MAKING THE MOST OF USED GUN SALES

BY CAROLEE ANITA BOYLES

Not every retailer can make a profit selling used products. Firearms retailers, however, can make significant incremental sales when they add used guns to their inventory.

Just ask Clay Ausley. He and his wife, Melissa, own Fuquay Gun in

Fuquay-Varina, N.C. Used gun sales represent about 30% of his business, depending on the economy — when the economy goes down, trade in used guns goes up.

“When the economy takes a downturn, folks are more apt to trade in a firearm when they want to purchase a new

one versus when people have some extra cash and just buy another one to add to their collection,” he shared. “Anytime we start seeing the economy take a downturn, we see more trade-ins, which helps us have more used guns to sell.”

Although he’s getting a good number of trade-ins now, Ausley is not seeing a lot of new gun owners trading in firearms — meaning people who purchased their first firearm during the past couple of years of COVID, civil unrest and general uncertainty are keeping what they have. Rather, the people trading in guns are long-time gun owners who have multiple firearms.

“For the most part, trade-in customers are longtime customers,” Ausley confirmed. “Most of the customers we saw during the COVID bump bought a firearm or two and aren’t as heavy into guns as the longtime customers are. Give them a couple more years and a few more guns and then they may trade one in, but a person who only has a gun or two is not typically a trade-in customer.”

A takeaway: We’re not losing all those new shooters we gained during the past couple of years.

WHAT’S TRENDING?

Chandler Holmes, one of the sales reps at Intrepid Shooting Sports in Fort Worth, Texas, said used guns represent a large part of their business.

“We have just about everything,” he acknowledged. “We have Springfield 1911s, we have

rolling blocks, we have all sorts of stuff.”

What Holmes sees changes with time as well, in unpredictable ways.

“Lately we’ve seen a lot of older rifles, from the 1950s and even a little older,” he stated.

These old guns have held their value and often sell for more than they did originally. The store often has older revolvers too, in a wide mix of calibers and manufacturers.

Intrepid Shooting Sports takes used guns as trade-ins and also on consignment. They sell them both over the counter and online, particularly on GunBroker.com.

At Fuquay Gun, Ausley shared there are no particular types, models or brands of firearms customers trade in any more frequently than others; the ones they trade are across the board. However, there’s a clear winner on the type of gun sold.

“When it comes to gun sales, handguns rule the

roost at Fuquay Gun, for sure,” he said. “We sell and trade more used handguns than we do long guns; it’s a wide variety, with a little bit of everything.”

It will come as no small surprise: used pistols dominate the handgun category at Fuquay Gun.

“We have 14 handgun cases — and only one of those is a revolver case,” he informed. “Revolvers, in my store, are definitely not the sought-after guns for the most part.” (Editor’s Note: Ausley confirmed this total includes his used and new handgun cases combined.)

Industry-wide, he said, looking back all the way to the 1960s and 1970s, revolvers were much more common than they are now.

“It’s just been trending that way,” he suggested. “The reason for it is, if you go back pre-1980, semi-autos were considered to be fairly unreliable. There were a couple of manufacturers that, in the 1980s, went a long way toward making semi-auto handguns as reliable or

“
**ANYTIME
WE START
SEEING THE
ECONOMY TAKE
A DOWNTURN,
WE SEE MORE
TRADE-INS,
WHICH HELPS
US HAVE MORE
USED GUNS TO
SELL.”**

CLAY AUSLEY, *Owner*
Fuquay Gun
Fuquay-Varina, N.C.



Josh Munoz, Fuquay Gun sales associate, hands over a used Stevens bolt-action .410 shotgun for inspection by the customer.



With the continued market dominance of handguns, it's not a bad idea to ensure display cases have a wide variety of used options for customers. On its website, GAT Guns will include a "On The Shelf Today!" tag for used guns in stock.

even more so than revolvers. It's one of the reasons we've seen this transition over the years. Today, there are some semi-auto companies we see fewer problems from than some revolver companies."

For example, Ausley said, tolerances today on firearms are very tight compared to what they were in the past. So, for a revolver made in the 1970s, the gap between the cylinder face and the barrel is much greater than in revolvers made today.

"Today, you can barely slide a piece of paper into that gap," Ausley observed. "If you shoot one of today's revolvers enough, one built very tight, and you get the face of the cylinder dirty enough, at some point the cylinder won't spin."

ONE, TWO OR 200 GUNS

Although many used guns come in as trade-ins by ones and twos, sometimes estates with large collections become available. Purchasing used guns this way requires a strong cash flow so a retailer can write a big check.

Greg Tropino, owner of GAT Guns in Dundee, Ill., often purchases estates.

"I'll buy one gun at a time, two at a time or 200 at a time," he said. "You have to have cash flow. Sometimes we write six-figure checks."

Firearms he purchases this way include lots of classic guns, including old black powder guns. Used guns represent about 10% of Tropino's business.

"I have about 6,000 guns in stock," he confirmed. "I sell them

both on GunBroker and in the store."

SHOW YOUR CUSTOMERS THEIR VALUE

Ausley doesn't sell many guns on consignment. Most of the time he either buys used guns or lets customers trade them in for other guns, whichever the customer prefers.

"We're extremely fair on the price we give customers," he said. "If they were to consign a gun, they really wouldn't be getting any more money, so most customers opt to sell a gun to us. It's rare we have anyone just absolutely demand we consign something."

On the other side of that transaction, when Ausley sells a used gun, it is just as likely to be online as it is over the counter.

"It's about 50-50 between in-store and online," he noted.

When someone trades in a used gun at Fuquay Gun, a store gunsmith completely cleans and services it before it's put out for sale.

"Then when we sell a gun to a customer — whether it's a new gun or a used gun — if they have an issue with that firearm, we stand with our customer," Ausley affirmed. "If they have a problem with a firearm, we fix it or we address it with the manufacturer, at no charge to the customer. When a customer buys a used gun from us, they don't have to worry about buying a lemon. We value our customers, and we don't want to lose one over one gun not working properly."

Ausley concluded he makes enough selling used guns to be able to continue paying a fair price for them when someone wants to sell.

All told, whether it makes up 5, 10, 30 or 50% of your business, the used gun market provides an important revenue stream for storefront dealers — and is likely set to increase with the economy in flux. **SI**

Dealers, what are your predictions for the used gun market? Will we see continued activity with rising inflation impacting the economy? We want to hear from you! comments@shootingindustry.com.

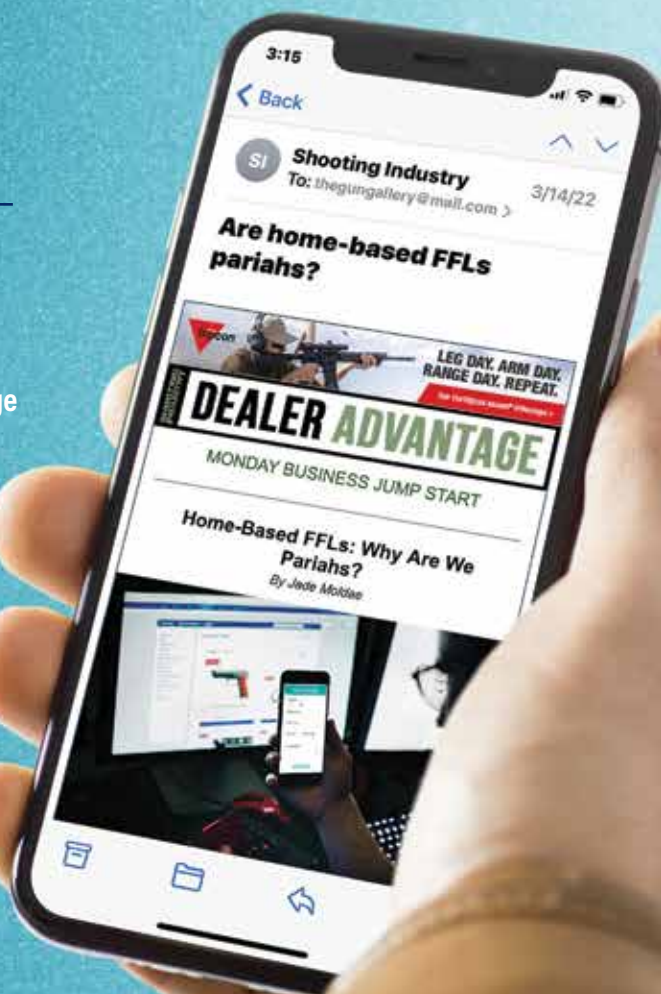
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BY BRYAN HENDRICKS

AIR POWER

Image: Александр Макаров / Adobe Stock

The airgun industry has strong wind in its sails,

and its growth appears to have immense potential. Traditionally, small-bore rifles and pistols dominate the airgun market. These are generally single-shot, piston-powered guns that charge the compression chamber with

a pump — usually .177- or .22-caliber.

In recent years, however, big-bore airguns have been ascendant for hunting big game. Worldwide, hunters use airguns with bores as large as .82-cal. to take every major big-game species.

BIG BORE MEETS BIG GAME

Airguns are becoming so popular, Safari Club International has added airguns as an independent trophy category. Buckmasters, a leading deer hunting organization, has also added an airgun category for white-tailed deer, as has Airgun Hunting Legion.

Their embrace has helped the industry gain solid traction in the big-game hunting community, according to Brad Webb, Umarex USA VP of sales. Based in Ft. Smith, Ark., Umarex is a top manufacturer of high-end pneumatic rifles and pistols.

“The Safari Club [trophy] book is very thick,” Webb said. “Every category is wide open. People are trying to get in the book with airgun rifles.”

Chad Simon of Harrisonburg, Va., owner of Lethal Air, killed the world-record white-tailed buck in Buckmasters airgun category. It was an 11-point Virginia buck, which scored about 160 on the Buckmasters scale. Simon shot the buck with a specially designed copper jacketed bullet made by Lehigh Defense.

Copper bullets generally don’t work in air rifles, Simon said, because copper is too hard. Airguns don’t produce enough pressure to move it from the barrel. The Lehigh Defense bullet has three small ribs that lightly contact the barrel while preventing air from venting past the bullet.

“It has a hollow point cut into four sections,” Simon informed. “It’s made to break off at 750 fps. When you shoot a

deer, the core goes through the deer, but four little broadheads splinter and drive different directions inside the deer. It causes all kinds of trauma — exactly what you need. I see copper as the future in airguns once they figure it out.”

So far, 26 states allow hunting with big-bore air rifles. In 2018, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission passed a regulation allowing hunters to use big-bore air rifles for deer hunting. A legal air rifle for deer must be at least .40-cal., and must produce at least 400 foot-pounds of pressure. It must also be charged with an external air tank.

Simon shared West Virginia’s legislature was exceptionally receptive to adding airguns as a legal deer hunting method. Idaho allows big-bore air rifles for all of its big game, including elk, sheep and moose. Alaska allows them for caribou and black-tailed deer.

OTHER GROWTH POINTS

Law enforcement is another fertile airgun market. Many law enforcement agencies use airguns for training because, according

to Webb, they’re non-lethal and inexpensive. Umarex is well known for its replica air pistols that resemble many of the service weapons used by agencies.

If you have someone come in off the street who has never shot before, you can put an airsoft or BB gun in their hand and start moving them up the chain.”

Scott Faldon,
Marketing Manager
Umarex USA

“We’re a leader in the replica realm,” Webb noted, “and we give people the opportunity to put a replica of their service firearm or their personal carry firearm in their holster and do any kind of training drills. You can train for a penny a round or less, and it gives you a lot more opportunity to practice muscle memory.”

Air rifles have also entered the bench rest competition world. Airgun meets are becoming big events, with prize money that

equals or surpasses “powder burn” matches. One such meet is the Rocky Mountain Airgun Challenge in June at Salt Lake City. This year, several hundred shooters competed in multiple categories. The top prize in the bench rest division was \$20,000.

Airguns are increasingly popular because they’re inexpensive to shoot compared to powder burning firearms, and they’re quiet. This allows owners to practice in their homes and backyards, even in densely populated neighborhoods.

Webb suggests they’re also valuable for teaching, because they have almost no recoil or muzzle jump. This reduces flinching and helps instill proper shooting habits.

Traditionally, air rifles are predominantly single-shot units, but repeaters are increasingly popular in the small-bore category.

“You’re seeing break-barrel guns with 10-round cylinders to advance pellets,” Webb relayed. “You get 10 shots before you have to reload the magazine.”

Scott Faldon, marketing manager for Umarex USA, said airguns are excellent portals for traditional gun retailers to access new shooters.

“Airguns are a good way to transition new gun owners or people who are curious about guns,” he provided. “If you have someone come in off the street who has never shot before, you can put an airsoft or BB gun in their hand and start moving them up the chain. They can start shooting BB pistol, move them to airsoft with blowback and then into .22-caliber and bigger.”

“HAVEN’T EVEN SCRATCHED THE SURFACE”

Justin Jacobson, owner of Utah Airguns in Orem, Utah, built a highly lucrative niche from ground level. He sold airguns from his convenience store, but it soon proved to be more profitable than gasoline and candy bars.

“After I sold five or six high-end airguns, I thought I should be a dealer for some of these products,” Jacobson recalled. “I started selling them out of a gas station. They



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Chad Simon out on a spring turkey hunt in the Virginia wilderness with the Umarex Gauntlet 2. In .22-caliber, the Gauntlet 2 will shoot lighter lead pellets in the 1,100 fps range. Adept for the range or woods, the Gauntlet 2 is outfitted with a Picatinny-style scope rail, knurled bolt handle and a redesigned stock.

started to get more and more popular with local guys, so I hired a person to do website and graphic design stuff. We put a website together and started selling them online.”

One advantage for airgun sales is the fact a seller can ship it to a buyer without the bureaucratic and regulatory hurdles governing firearms commerce.

“Last year we did \$20 million in revenue, which was a 30% increase over the previous year,” Jacobson confirmed. “In the four years previous (2016–19), we grew over 100% a year.”

The rapid evolution of airguns suggests such astronomical growth will continue for the foreseeable future.

“Being in the industry’s infancy stages, we haven’t even scratched the surface on what’s to come,” Jacobson proposed. “In two, four, 10 years’ time, it’s evolved leaps and bounds. It’s a fun industry to be in.”

ARROW GUNS

One development generating great excitement is the air-powered arrow gun. It uses pneumatic power to propel arrows. Virginia allows hunters with orthopedic disabilities to use them for big-game hunting during archery season, but they may be used without restriction during muzzleloading and modern-gun deer seasons.

“My dad is in his 70s. He fell off a ladder and sustained a serious shoulder injury,” Simon said. “He’s been using an Umarex AirSaber for two or three years. He killed a 250-lb. black bear with his.”

Simon used an arrow gun to kill a 7’ alligator in Florida. He also organizes hunts in Florida to kill exotic iguanas, which are an ecological menace.

“Each time we took out three boats, each time in canals,” Simon said. “We killed about 500 iguanas in two days of shooting. I also have some arrow guns rigged up to do some bowfishing trips.”

THE WAVE IS JUST BEGINNING

Accessories are a big part of the airgun industry, too. Smaller, more efficient air compressors are in high demand to charge high-performance airguns. Airgunners also demand specialized optics. And, of course, airgunners have an insatiable appetite for ammo. This all translates to big sales potential for retailers.

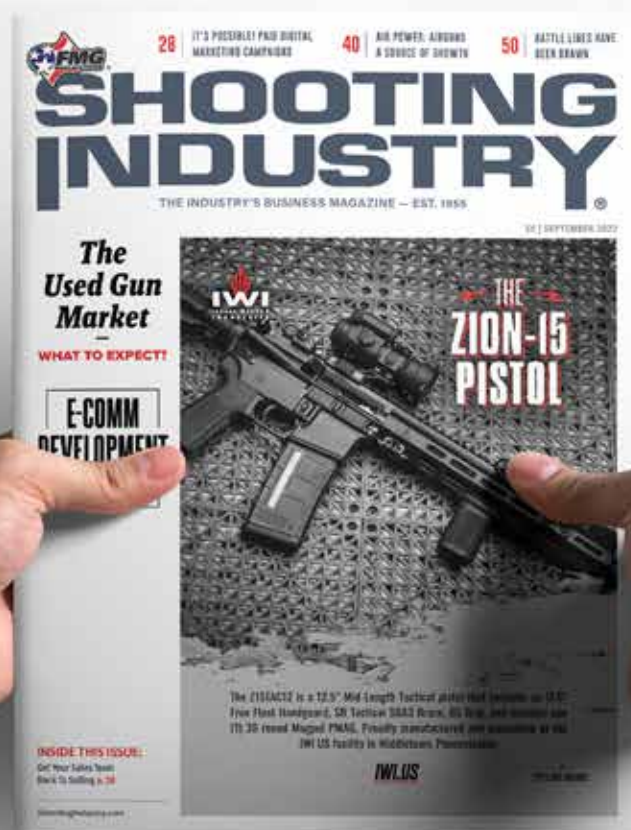
Social media glimpses the airgun market’s potential. Facebook has many airgun groups, some of which contain 10,000–20,000 members.

Retailers who caught the airgun wave early are reaping tremendous benefits, but the wave has a long way to go yet before it hits the shore. **SI**



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By Jenna Buckley



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The SPYPOINT **FLEX** trail camera boasts 33-megapixel images, 1080p video with sound, 100' flash range and 100' detection range. Videos will also be available to be transmitted to the SPYPOINT app and will appear in the gallery as an animated preview, after which users can request the full-length HD version which will be sent to the app and replace the preview. The dual-SIM configuration of the FLEX includes two preinstalled and pre-activated SIM cards allowing the camera to connect to the best network available. The camera automatically selects the best, most reliable network. The user never has to do any manual process to ensure the best network is being used.

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earthsafeca.com

AQUATABS from EarthSafe Chemical Alternatives kill 99.99% of microorganisms, viruses and bacteria to prevent cholera, typhoid, dysentery and other water-borne diseases. The pre-measured tablets rapidly disinfect small or large quantities of water in just 30 minutes after mixing. The individually packaged tablets are designed to be highly portable for travel as well as outdoor activities like backpacking, hiking, camping, boating, and RVs. Aquatabs are iodine-free, and dissolve clear for great tasting drinking water in only half an hour.



MEOPTA SPORTS OPTICS

(800) 828-8928
meoptasportsoptics.com

Meopta Sports Optics' **MEOPRO HD PLUS** binoculars are available in 10x42 and 8x56 models. This Gen 2 version of the Meopro binocular line features an upgraded HD optical system, delivering sharper, brighter images and better contrast than previous models. The focus wheel was redesigned for a smoother, faster and more precise focus. The modern exterior, with durable rubber armoring, provides a better and more comfortable grip in all weather conditions. The lightweight magnesium alloy body is built to withstand the most brutal hunting conditions and is tripod adapter ready. Twist-up eyecups are metal with a soft rubber exterior, making them extremely durable and comfortable while eliminating the risk of breakage. They are also designed for easy removal and cleaning.

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511tactical.com

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BOND ARMS

(817) 573-4445
bondarms.com

Bond Arms adds to its Stinger collection with the single-action **STINGER RS**, available in .380 Auto and 9mm. It features a 3" stainless steel double barrel, passive and manual safeties. It has an integral trigger guard and high-impact nylon, slim grips. The Stinger RS weighs 16 oz. (with slim grips), is 5" long, 4" high and less than 1" wide.



FIX IT STICKS

(872) 802-3110
store.fixitsticks.com

Fix It Sticks introduces its **FIELD TOOLKIT** designed specifically for GLOCK handguns. The kit includes: ratchet T-handle w/locking hex drive, mini all-in-one torque driver, 3/32" pin punch, 1/8" pin punch, steel pick, cleaning brush bit, channel liner installation and removal tools, GLOCK sight tool, GLOCK magazine base plate removal tool, battery cap tool, two brass rods, set of two 8-32 adapters, 10 Electroless nickel-plated bits: T8, T10, T15, P1, H2.5mm, H.050", H1/16", H5/64", 3/32" extended bit (for adjusting hard-to-reach screws on optics) and SL6mm and a compact, easily portable carrying case.

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GROVTEC

(503) 557-4689
grovtec.com

The **SABRE SLING** from GrovTec is a third-generation design that maintains a lightweight, minimal profile. Based on a tailless design to reduce snagging, the Sabre Sling includes quick-slide adjustment to support shooter positional changes. The heavy-duty push-button, quick-disconnect swivels are included at each end. Leaving the sling open for customization, ends are left open to permit personalization for those preferring loop, HK-style clip or other attachment methods. The sling is available in black, Flat Dark Earth (pictured), Multi-Cam and Multi-Cam Black.



DAVIDSON'S INC.

(800) 367-4867
davidsoninc.com

The **XLV EXCLUSIVE** from Davidson's, produced with Girsan and imported by European American Armory, is available in four models. The XLV features an enlarged, extended slide release; ambidextrous, extended thumb-safety; extended beavertail; memory bump grip safety; serrated combat-style skeletonized hammer; and checkering on both the mainspring housing and the front strap of the grip. The trigger guard is flared on both sides and grip panels are diamond-checked black plastic with the Girsan logo. The front sight is a dovetail cut white dot with a Novak-style rear sight. An eight-round magazine is included. The complete XLV family includes a Commander-style pistol with a 4.25" barrel or full-size 1911 with 5" barrel; both are available in Davidson's Dark Earth Cerakote or black Cerakote finish.



CUSTOMBILT FIREARMS MANUFACTURING

(913) 204-1353
custombiltguns.com

The **MMRB-556** rifle from Custombilt Firearms' MMR series incorporates an F-marked front sight block and Magpul Industries M-LOK SL handguard. The rifle boasts an M16 cut nitride bolt carrier group, matched with a fully nitrided Ballistic Advantage 16" mid-length barrel. The mid-length gas system provides an extremely soft and controllable recoil impulse. The MPP-GI trigger has micro-polished contact surfaces and a fitted disconnect. This combination gives users the 5-lb. weight of a typical duty trigger, and removes all of the gritty drag while breaking the shot.



MAUSER

(210) 377-2527
blaser-group.com/us

Blaser Group introduces the Mauser **M18 SAVANNA** bolt-action rifle. This M18 features a Savanna tan stock with grip inserts and a threaded barrel for the addition of a suppressor or muzzlebrake. The hunting rifle features a cold hammer-forged German-steel barrel, three-position safety and adjustable trigger allowing users to set a preferred pull weight from 2.25 lbs. to 4.25 lbs. The 60-degree oversized bolt with three locking lugs and two extractor pins allows for quick and smooth cycling of cartridges from the standard five-round magazine (10-round magazines are also available). The Mauser M18 Savanna accepts Remington 700 LA-style mounts and is available with a 1/2x28 threaded barrel in .223 Rem., .243 Win., .270 Win., 6.5 Creedmoor, 6.5 PRC and 7mm Rem. Mag. and a 9/16x24 threaded barrel in .30-06, .300 Win. Mag. and .308 Win.

FMG PUBLICATIONS

(866) 820-4045
fmgpubs.com

Inside FMG Publications' Special Edition issue of **DIY GUNS**, at-home gunsmiths and armorers will discover articles with step-by-step instructions and ideas for a host of projects. *DIY GUNS* outlines legally converting an M1 Carbine into a fully automatic M2 version, salvaging a special gun from high-mileage wear and tear, how to custom-mold a holster for today's hottest handguns, fitting a bushing to a 1911 barrel, customizing a Ruger Wrangler, transforming a Remington 870 into a home-defense gun, personalizing a GLOCK, converting .22 LR cases to .223 bullets, how to lower a hammer spur and more.



SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

(800) 680-6866
springfield-armory.com

Springfield Armory announced the release of **TWO-TONE STAINLESS STEEL HELLCAT** and **HELLCAT OSP** micro 9mm pistols — exclusive variants developed specifically for sale by distributor Sports South. The 3" barreled micro compact pistols boast an 11+1 capacity with their patented magazine, and 13+1 with the included extended mag. Both offerings ship with one 11-round magazine with pinkie extension and optional flush-fitting floorplate, as well as the 13-round extended magazine. The OSP version features a removable cover plate that allows direct mounting of a micro red dot in the Springfield Micro footprint for the lowest possible profile.





ARMASIGHT

(888) 504-2762
armasight.com

Armasight's **CONTRACTOR** line is the first weapon-mounted thermal optic powered by the new ArmaCORE Thermal Core technology, which brings 12 micron pixels, high-performance imaging and feature set to the system. It can be used in all environmental conditions to improve object detection in low-contrast daylight, total darkness or through smoke, haze and light fog. The Contractor offers a 60 Hz 1024x768 display resolution, USB and WiFi video streaming, four hours of onboard video recording and low battery consumption from standard CR123A batteries. The Armasight app allows for remote control of the unit, photo and video capture, live streaming, GPS location and updates to the unit.



CROSSBREED HOLSTERS

(888) 732-5011
crossbreedholsters.com

The **MODULAR BELLY BAND 2.0** from CrossBreed boasts a polyester jersey outer shell that delivers a soft, form-fitting feel against the skin while maintaining breathability. The band includes anti-slip panels to minimize rotation or slippage of the band so the holstered firearm stays comfortably positioned. The Modular Belly Band 2.0 is designed to accept CrossBreed's Modular holster. With the modular system, the holstered firearm can be custom positioned for optimal comfort, carry positions and draw angle. This system also comes with two integrated pockets that fit most semi-auto pistol magazines as well as a pocket for a mobile device.



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OSPREY 9 2.0

SILENCERCO

(801) 417-5384
silencerco.com

SilencerCo launched a 2.0 version of its Osprey 9 and Osprey 45 suppressors. The **OSPREY 9 2.0** and **OSPREY 45 2.0** use a single button to properly index to a host firearm, making the suppressor more robust, more reliable and allow for a quick and secure alignment. It also makes the suppressor more repeatable; the user will be able to consistently put it in the same position on every firearm. Its offset design allows for the use of most factory pistol sights, and it is compatible with pistons and fixed-barrel spacers. The Osprey 9 2.0 weighs 8.8 oz., and is 6.9" long. The Osprey 45 2.0 weighs 9.2 oz., and is 7.9" long.

STREAMLIGHT INC.

(800) 523-7488
streamlight.com

Streamlight Inc. introduces the **TLR RM 1 LASER-G** and **TLR RM 2 LASER-G** tactical lights for long guns — each featuring a high-visibility green aiming laser. The rail-mounted lights feature independently operating push-button and remote pressure switches. Also available in light-only models, the **TLR RM 1 LASER-G** and **TLR RM 2 LASER-G** deliver 500 and 1,000 lumens, respectively. The lights feature three modes: Laser only, LED only and LED/Laser. The remote switch is designed to exit the weapon at a 90-degree angle, providing improved cable routing to preserve rail space. The models are designed to quickly and securely attach to any long gun with a MIL Standard 1913 or NATO rail. Each light includes a key kit to securely affix the light onto a broad array of weapons.



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BEST PRACTICES

Continued from p. 29

Rather than put all their eggs in one basket, ranges and retailers should diversify their marketing efforts and prioritize those that allow them to maintain more control over first-party data. Doing so can yield far greater return.

Case in point: For every \$1 spent on a pay-per-click advertising campaign,



Rather than put all their eggs in one basket, ranges and retailers should diversify their marketing efforts.

such as through Google or Facebook, the average return on investment is \$2.⁴ Email marketing, however, returns \$36 for every \$1 spent.⁵

Other tried-and-true digital marketing tactics utilizing platforms or data you own and control include search engine optimization and SMS (text message) marketing. Compared to emails, text messages actually tend to be more effective. They have a 98% open rate compared to 20% in emails.⁶ Statistics show SMS marketing also yields a higher click-through rate compared to email and Facebook marketing.

WORKING TOGETHER

Lastly, the most important thing those in the firearms industry can do to combat the censorship being carried out by Big Tech is work together.

"One of the most alarming trends I'm hearing about is ranges and retailers reporting competitors in their area on social media or leaving negative reviews," said Kahn. "They know from

firsthand experience how easy it is to have an entire account shutdown over a single, small violation, and they're using it to hurt their competitors. But the reality is they're negatively impacting the entire industry. As an industry, we're under attack and we have to band together." **SI**

Footnotes:

1. marketingcharts.com/advertising-trends/spending-and-spenders-224702
2. prnewswire.com/news-releases/digital-marketing-market-to-be-valued-at-460-billion-by-2022-says-beroe-inc-301497636.html
3. propublica.org/article/google-guns-ads-firearms-alphabet-advertising
4. smallbizgenius.net/by-the-numbers/ppc-stats
5. constantcontact.com/blog/email-marketing-statistics
6. smscomparison.com/mass-text-messaging/2022-statistics

For more info:
wearetopple.com
treadagency.com

The company stated the purpose of the report: “This report is intended to highlight our commitment to promote the responsible ownership of firearms and to dispel various myths about us and our industry.”

WHAT'S NEXT?

With a split Senate, H.R.1808 has little chance of advancing to President Biden's desk. Even mainstream outlets

have admitted as such: *The New York Times* published a story claiming it's “doomed in the Senate.”

However, the passage of H.R.1808 demonstrates what a Democrat-controlled Congress is capable of. Rather than zeroing in on crime, elected officials are targeting lawful gun owners.

And they're not done yet: The Equal Access to Justice for Victims of

Gun Violence Act (H.R.2814), which would repeal PLCAA, has attracted 80 cosponsors (all Democrats). As of this writing, it has not moved forward for a House vote — but a party-line vote would advance it to the Senate.

The battle lines have been drawn. Election Day is Nov. 8 — and the Second Amendment is on the ballot. Therefore, encourage employees and customers to become educated and vote.

NASGW RELEASES Q2 SCOPE REPORT

The National Association of Sporting Goods Wholesalers (NASGW) has released the 2022 Q2 SCOPE Report compiling distributor sales and inventory data from January 1, 2022 through June 30, 2022.

“The data in our SCOPE platform is becoming more and more valuable to businesses and organizations across our industry,” said Kenyon Gleason, NASGW president. “Our Q2 report is a good high-level snapshot of existing trends

with some deeper analysis by Tom Hopper, NASGW senior data analyst.”

The 2022 Q2 Report marks the third report published by NASGW. Others include the 2021 Annual Report and the Q1 Report. These reports offer a regular review of current marketing conditions through distributor shipments, a level of insight previously unavailable to the industry.

“For businesses looking for a better way to understand what's actually happening in today's market conditions, the SCOPE quarterly reports are a great tool,” Hopper added. “The data we're using to analyze the market is the largest



data sample available across the industry and paints a realistic picture about what's happening. The insight is invaluable.”

NASGW has published a free, basic version of the report, as well as a full version of the report (available for purchase).

For more info: nasgwscope.org/resources/purchase-quarterly-reports.
[/ nasgwscope.org](https://nasgwscope.org)

NRA FOUNDATION, NSSF SUPPORT USA SHOOTING

The NRA Foundation and NSSF have each recently announced new initiatives to support USA Shooting.

USA Shooting athletes won a total of six medals at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, with four captured in Olympic shotgun events.

To bolster shotgun ammunition availability for USA Shooting athletes — specifically, those training and competing in the International Skeet and Trap events — the NRA Foundation board of trustees approved a \$252,000 grant for USA Shooting. This grant will provide for the purchase of ammunition that will be used by the National Team, National Development Team and National Junior Team.

“For decades The NRA Foundation has provided essential funding to benefit the shooting sports,” said Tyler Schropp, NRA Foundation executive director.

“When we were approached with this opportunity, it just made sense. Thanks to our generous and committed donors, we're able to fulfill this urgent need of America's aspiring Olympians.”

“The last three years have posed tremendous challenges to our sport in the form of event cancellations, the postponement of the Olympics and severe supply chain constraints on ammunition,” said Buddy DuVall, USA Shooting CMO. “We're thrilled to be partnering with the NRA Foundation to provide the very best training and competition ammunition to the shotgun team that has won 30 medals this year in World Cup competitions.”

For the month of August, NSSF launched a national fundraising campaign for USA Shooting timed in conjunction with National Shooting Sports Month.

NSSF's “Support Future Champions” campaign established a fundraising goal of \$25,000, which will be used for USA Shooting athletes as they prepare for



the 2022 World Championships this fall.

“USA Shooting Team athletes have excelled on the Olympic and international stage for decades, and your support will help these standard-bearing athletes benefit from the best in training, equipment, coaching and onsite support at the 2022 World Championships,” said NSSF President and CEO Joe Bartozzi. “I encourage everyone who cares about the shooting sports to make a donation in support of USA Shooting. I know we can reach our goal of \$25,000 and more!”

Editor's Note: The “Support Future Champions” campaign was still ongoing at press time. [/ usashooting.org](https://usashooting.org)
[/ nrafoundation.org](https://nrafoundation.org) / nssf.org **SI**

BY JADE MOLDAE

BATTLE LINES HAVE BEEN DRAWN

July 29, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R.1808, the Assault Weapons Ban of 2022. This bill makes it a crime to “knowingly import, sell, manufacture, transfer or possess” an AR-15/MSR-style rifle or standard-capacity magazines (greater than 15 rounds).

“This legislation is as dangerous as it is revealing of the contempt that the House Democrats hold for the Constitution and the U.S. Supreme Court,” said Larry Keane, NSSF SVP and general counsel. “Democratic representatives are not fulfilling the interest of ‘the People,’ and are instead representing special-interest gun control groups that seek to disarm law-abiding citizens and scapegoat them for crimes committed by others.”

With a 217–213 vote, H.R.1808 passed on virtual party lines — five Democrats and two Republicans voted with the opposition. It now heads to an evenly divided Senate. No surprise, President Biden announced his desire to see it pass through the upper chamber quickly.

“The majority of the American people agree with this common sense action,” he said. “The Senate should move quickly to get this bill to my desk, and I will not stop fighting until it does. There can be no greater responsibility than to do all we can to ensure the safety of our families, our children, our homes, our communities and our nation.”

In the leadup to this bill’s passage, NSSF updated the industry estimate of MSRs in circulation in the U.S. to 24,446,000 since 1990 — an increase of 4.5 million rifles since the last estimate was released in 2020. To put this figure into broader context, there are more MSRs in circulation than there are Ford F-Series trucks on the road.

If this bill becomes the law of the land, the “commonly owned” aspect of these semi-auto rifles will be crucial in inevitable court appeals. In the *Heller* and *Bruen* rulings, the Supreme Court upheld commonly owned firearms are lawful for private ownership.

“Banning of an entire class of semiautomatic firearms can be viewed as nothing short of an outright infringement of Second Amendment rights — rights which belong to the people and not the government,” the NSSF said in a statement condemning the passage of H.R.1808.

HOUSE HEARING SPOKE VOLUMES

Before H.R.1808’s passage, on July 27, House Oversight Committee Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) hosted a hearing on “Examining the Practices and Profits of Gun Manufacturers” — which sought out to vilify the industry.

Maloney’s opening statement said it all: “The gun industry has flooded our neighborhoods, our schools and even our churches and synagogues with these deadly weapons [AR-15s] — and has

gotten rich doing it.”

The hearing featured the testimony of Chris Killoy, Ruger president and CEO, and Marty Daniel, founder and CEO of Daniel Defense, along with three other witnesses. Mark Smith, president and CEO of Smith & Wesson, was also invited but did not attend the hearing. (Aug. 1, Rep. Maloney followed through on a threat to issue a subpoena to Smith & Wesson after the company’s “refusal to voluntarily produce key information” on its sales of ARs/MSRs to civilians.)

During the hearing, Killoy and Daniel wielded off a number of baseless attacks from those representatives with a “D” next to their name. This hearing showcased the Left’s utter dislike of a commonly owned platform, how it’s marketed (which was labeled as “irresponsible advertising” like those in the tobacco industry decades ago and today’s opioid epidemic), “Buy Now, Pay Later” financing, the Protections of Lawful Commerce In Arms Act (PLCAA) and more.



Democratic representatives are not fulfilling the interest of ‘the People,’ and are instead representing special-interest gun control groups that seek to disarm law-abiding citizens and scapegoat them for crimes committed by others.”

Larry Keane, SVP & General Counsel
NSSF

(For additional coverage of the hearing, visit: shootingindustry.com/dealer-advantage/house-oversight-committee-hearing-speaks-volumes.)

Aug. 15, Smith & Wesson responded to accusations made by Rep. Maloney and others with a strongly worded rebuke from CEO Mark Smith. In addition, the company released a “Firearm Market Factsheet” available on its website (smith-wesson.com/sites/default/files/sw_fact_sheet.pdf).

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