

**24**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
IS A KEY TO GROWTH**30**EVOLVE! "BUYERS" ARE NOW
"INVENTORY MANAGERS"**40**STOREFRONTS VS. HOME-BASED:
WHO BRINGS MORE VALUE?

SHOOTING INDUSTRY®

THE INDUSTRY'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE — EST. 1955

\$5 | NOVEMBER 2022

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CONTENTS

COLUMNS

6

ITI

Inside This Issue

Avoiding The "S" Word

10

IN

Industry News

- New Report Highlights Expanding Diversity In Hunting, The Shooting Sports
- Federal Ammunition Awarded U.S. Army Contract
- DC Project Continues Advocacy, Education Efforts

18

NM

Newsmakers

Celerant Adds To Marketing Team, Big Rock Hires President + More ...

20

PDM

Personal Defense Market

Selling Revolvers To Women (And Others)

By Massad Ayoob

22

AW

Arms & The Woman

What Women Really Want

By Ashley McGee

24

BP

Best Practices

Become Part Of Your Community Thread

By Brenna McCoubrey

50

IL

Industry Link

3 Values That Have Aged Well

By Jade Moldae

Departments

8 Letters To The Editor

48 Advertiser Index

44 New Products



36

Varmint/Predator Hunting Is A Moving Target

By Bryan Hendricks

FEATURES

26

A Year-End Blowout Or Targeted Sales?

Get The Most Out Of Big Sales Events & Promotions

By Tim Barker

30

It's Time To Evolve!

Why "Buyer" Is An Outdated Role

By Hank Yacek

32

Safe & Sound

Eyewear + Hearing Protection Sales Trends

By Shannon Farlow

40

Storefronts vs. Home-Based vs. Ranges

Who Brings The Most Value To The Industry?


By Doug VanderWoude

ONLINE-ONLY

Midterms Or Economy Driving Sales?

Dealers Weigh In, Point To The Latter

By Emily Miller

 shootingindustry.com/midterms-or-economy



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Avoiding The “S” Word

With the holiday and year-end buying season here, is your store making the most of the ready-made opportunity

to boost sales? Inside this issue, dealers share how to make the most of promotions and events (while avoiding the “S” word), tips for taking advantage of being a small business and carrying what customers are looking for.

Discounting has become so common today, the word “sale” is threatening to lose its value — leading to customers simply tuning out the word. Putting some muscle back into this particular four-letter word requires creativity and planning, according to PWG’s John Phillips.

When his store has an event, Phillips engineers it to drive future marketing efforts.

“Instead of just giving everything away at a discounted rate, we’re getting something in return from the customer. We’re getting their marketing information,” he said. “You’d be amazed at what people will give away in terms of marketing information in order to win a T-shirt or a pen.”

For more, see **pp. 26–29**.

SELLING REVOLVERS TO WOMEN (AND OTHERS)

In this month’s *Personal Defense Market* installment, Massad Ayoob

takes on a topic proposed by dealer Steven Hamilton, who noted the success he’s had in selling revolvers to women. Ayoob highlights a revolver’s selling points — including ease of loading, concealability, shootability and more — to women and men alike. See **pp. 20–21**.

UPDATING THE ROLE OF “BUYER”

According to Hank Yacek, the traditional “buyer” at a retail store “needs to be retired, tossed away in the dustbin of yesterday and left to the history books.” He proposes changing “buyers” into “inventory managers.”

“If the buyer’s responsibility ends when the product hits the loading dock, you’re quite likely sitting on punishing levels of excess, old, hard-to-sell and/or dated inventory that eats up your cash reserves,” Yacek added.

See **p. 30**.

STOREFRONTS VS. HOME-BASED VS. RANGES

It’s a topic that has generated a considerable amount of engagement this year: home-based dealers feel as though they’re treated as “pariahs” by the industry.

Doug VanderWoude wades into this subject, contending: “Not only do I believe storefront retailers deserve first crack at new items, hard-to-get inventory and, most importantly, better pricing than non-storefronts, I feel ranges with retail should get even more benefits. Why? Because they provide a huge asset to both the



NOVEMBER 2022

consumer and our industry.”

To read “Storefronts vs. Home-Based vs. Ranges” see **pp. 40–42**. Agree/disagree? Have your say: editor@shootingindustry.com.

COMING NEXT MONTH: NEW BUSINESS YEAR EDITION

The December issue is *SI*’s first of two 2023 New Business Year editions. It will have a number of features — including an extended look at the aforementioned “pariah dealer” topic that has generated a record amount of engagement this year, how to expand sales to emerging markets, traditional marketing best practices, a look at prospective 2023 sales trends and more. It also presents the Greatest Buyer’s Guide In The Universe biannual update and expansive 2023 New Product Showcase. **SI**



FEATURE HIGHLIGHT

**“It’s Time To Evolve!
Why ‘Buyer’ Is An Outdated Role”**

By Hank Yacek

PAGE 30



2022

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Image: Olga Mendenhall / Adobe Stock

COVERAGE HITS THE NAIL ON THE HEAD

Just wanted to say thanks for your efforts on publicizing the most recent attempts by gun banners to go after our industry.

The article "The Anti-Gun Movement's Latest Target" hits it on the head. I met with some industry friends in D.C. in mid-September, and the credit card issues — along with shipper restrictions — are pretty key issues right now.

These are probably not the last things we'll see from the anti-gun movement either. They just don't know how to quit until they get their ultimate wish of a complete ban on everything. Crazy world we live in. Appreciate the work and you bringing this to light.

— Kenyon Gleason, President
NASGW

Editor's Note: "The Anti-Gun Movement's Latest Target" appeared in *Shooting Industry's* e-newsletter, *Dealer Advantage*, Monday, Sept. 19. It covered the ISO's recent decision to create a new Merchant Category Code for gun stores to use when processing credit card transactions.

Just wanted to say thanks for your efforts on publicizing the most recent attempts by gun banners to go after our industry.

PROFIT OUTWEIGHS PASSION TODAY

Being a small, home-based gunsmith, I've followed the "pariah dealer" debate. When I became an FFL some 30 years ago, virtually all distributors were happy to have your business. No matter how small. Today, profit outweighs passion.

Volume outweighs service. Sales outweighs friendship. This is the direction of the industry, regardless of the "feel good" articles and interviews.

My question now is, can *Shooting Industry* put together a list of distributors who will still serve the thousands of us home-based FFLs with real distributor prices and little to no "jump through the hoop, 20 pages of paperwork before our accountants will consider you" baloney?

— Kevin L. Silha

K & S Arms, La Crosse, Wis.


Kevin, your email is similar to dozens I've received from other home-based FFLs. We'll be running a follow-up to this discussion in the December issue of *Shooting Industry* — and I'm seeking input from wholesalers, as well. Stay tuned.

— Jade Moldae, Editor

PLUGGING CONTENT HOLES

Your magazine spends huge efforts in building the retail gun market. However, I feel you're ignoring vast other areas, such as:

- NFA-related: destructive devices, machine guns, AOW, SBR and SBS — you spend enough time on suppressors.
- Another idea: How can the above compete with Form 1 SBS, SBR, AOWs and suppressors?
- Gunsmithing and new technology: CNC plasma cutters, CNC machine centers, tools and metrology.
- ATF compliance and mitigation.
- The growth of ATF licensee businesses: The progression from 01 to 07, to 08, to 09, to 10 and to 11. These are vastly lucrative areas compared to 01.

I enjoyed the Woman's Issue earlier this year. I have a good many female clients, one of whom just got her first pre-'68 machine gun — a very nice M1919! The common thread? They're all USMC veterans. 

— David Hope, Owner

Hope Gun Works, Martinsville, Ind.

HAVE A THOUGHT WHILE READING THE ISSUE?

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NEW REPORT HIGHLIGHTS EXPANDING DIVERSITY IN HUNTING, THE SHOOTING SPORTS

Hunting and target shooting participation diversity has increased in the U.S. over the past decade according to a new report released by the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports (CAHSS) and the Outdoor Foundation.

The 2022 Special Report on Hunting and the Shooting Sports provides a comprehensive look at the more than 30 million Americans ages 6 and over who participated at least once in hunting or target shooting with both firearms and archery equipment in 2021. The report identifies trends and includes detailed information about participation including motivations, barriers, and preferences of participants.

“We’re excited to release this report and believe it will prove valuable in the short and long term as we evaluate participation trends,” said the Swanny Evans, CAHSS director of research and partnerships. “It’s important to note these data will not always align with hunting license sale data, but tracking both sale and survey data go a long way

to providing a better overall picture of the trends in hunting and shooting sports participation.”

The new report featured highlights in hunting, as well as both firearms and archery target shooting.

HUNTING TAKEAWAYS

- 4.6% of the U.S. population ages 6 and over went hunting at least once;
- 27% of participants were female (up from 16% a decade ago);
- Share of hunters who were Black or Hispanic increased 4% and 1%, respectively, on average for the past three years;
- According to respondents, the number-one motivation for hunting was “For food/meat”;
- 49% of hunters first participated before the age of 18;
- 68% of hunters were introduced to hunting by family members.

FIREARMS TARGET SHOOTING TAKEAWAYS

- 6.2% of the U.S. population ages 6 and over participated in target shooting;

- 32% of participants were female, up from 25% a decade ago;
- Black or Hispanic participation increased 5% and 4%, respectively, on average for the past three years;
- “For recreation” was the number-one motivation for target shooting;
- “High cost” was the number-one barrier reported for target shooting.

ARCHERY TARGET SHOOTING TAKEAWAYS

- 2.4% of the U.S. population ages 6 and over participated in archery;
- 39% of participants were female, the highest since 2016;
- Archers are slightly more diverse than firearms target shooters;
- “For recreation” was the number-one motivation for target shooting;
- 19% of participants shot solely on public property/ranges.

The special report was developed to serve as a companion to the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation’s Special Report on Fishing — produced annually in partnership with the Outdoor Foundation.



Tracking both sale and survey data go a long way to providing a better overall picture of the trends in hunting and shooting sports participation.”

Swanny Evans, *Director of Research & Partnership, CAHSS*

The 2022 Special Report on Hunting and the Shooting Sports, which provides participation data for hunting and shooting sports, can be accessed on the CAHSS website, cahss.org/our-research/2022-special-report-on-hunting-and-the-shooting-sports. / cahss.org / outdoorindustry.org

AMMO INC. OPENS NEW MANUFACTURING FACILITY

AMMO Inc., producer of high-performance ammunition and components and owner of GunBroker.com, celebrated the grand opening of its new 185,000 sq. ft. manufacturing facility in Manitowoc, Wis., September 22.

Fred Wagenhals, AMMO Inc.'s chairman and CEO, and the company's senior management team hosted a ribbon-cutting event that included Manitowoc Mayor Justin Nickels.

"I'm proud of the entire AMMO team for their hard work on this project, which will provide a solid foundation for the company's continued growth in the ammunition and components manufacturing side of our business," said Wagenhals.

The new plant integrates state-of-



AMMO Inc. CEO Fred Wagenhals celebrates with employees, board members and local/state officials during a ribbon-cutting to mark the opening of the company's new 185,000 sq. ft. facility in Manitowoc, Wis.

the-art capabilities, allowing AMMO to significantly expand production capacity to meet the increased demand for its commercial, military and law enforcement products, both domestically and overseas. The company currently employs over 300 people in Manitowoc, and anticipates hiring another 100 team members over the next year.

"The other new plant opportunities we aggressively and diligently explored were substantially more expensive, and involved proposed schedules that would have set our operations back considerably.

The collective efforts of AMMO, the city of Manitowoc and general contractor/architect teams over the past 18 months were critical to ensuring that the project was executed successfully, on time and within our budget, with incredibly helpful assistance provided by Mayor Nickels' team throughout," Wagenhals said.

AMMO, founded in 2016, promotes branded munitions as well as its patented STREAK Visual Ammunition, /stelTH/ subsonic munitions and specialty rounds for military and law enforcement use via government programs. / ammo-inc.com

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INDUSTRY NEWS

REMINGTON HOSTS INAUGURAL SHOOT TO CURE CHARITY FUNDRAISER

The Remington Gun Club hosted the inaugural Shoot to Cure charitable fundraiser on September 23 in Lonoke, Ark. The event raised a five-figure amount for the Arkansas Children's Foundation, a nonprofit organization supporting children's hospitals and disease research.

Featuring Remington's new Gun Club Cure ammunition, Shoot to Cure brought together community leaders, local companies and top-tier shooters, all focused on helping families and children in need.

"We're thrilled at the outcome of our



Following Remington Gun Club's first Shoot to Cure fundraiser event, Remington's Adam White presents a check for \$10,000 to Megan Flores, development officer for the Arkansas Children's Foundation.

first Shoot to Cure," said Remington's director of marketing Joel Hodgdon. "Thanks to all our attendees and sponsors, the sporting clays fundraiser gave us all a chance to give back to our community, and break a few clays along the way."

The event was made possible by sponsors including Remington, Bushnell, Nighthawk Custom, Silencer Central, Midway USA Foundation, Staley Electric, Confetti's, United Health and Smart Choice Delivery, among others. / remington.com

FEDERAL AMMUNITION AWARDED U.S. ARMY CONTRACT

Federal Ammunition announced the award of a five-year contract to produce the U.S. Army's AA40 5.56mm frangible training ammunition. The contract is valued at \$114 million.

"This contract is historic. It's the largest government contract awarded to Federal in its 100 years of operation, and speaks volumes to the trust the United States military has in our American workforce

assembling the best products for our servicemen and servicewomen," said Jason Vanderbrink, president of Federal Ammunition.

Federal's frangible ammunition is designed to disintegrate into small fragments on impact, minimizing over-penetrating and ricochet hazards, making it ideal for training purposes.

"Successfully executing on the AA40 contract requires large-scale production capabilities combined with stringent quality-control measures. Awards of this magnitude are validation of



Federal's committed workforce to meet these demands and provide the best ammunition possible for our U.S. armed forces time and time again," added Erik Carlson, senior director of operations at Federal. / federalpremium.com

ONX SECURES \$87.4 MILLION IN SERIES B FUNDING

onX, a pioneer in outdoor digital navigation, has announced an \$87.4M Series B investment. The funding round was led by Summit Partners, which led the company's Series A financing in 2018, and includes participation from Steve Burke's Madison Valley Partners and other existing investors. This growth investment will support onX as the company reimagines the outdoor experience and works to protect the landscapes that host recreational pursuits.

Founded in 2009 and based in Missoula, Mont., onX creates mapping and navigation technology that helps inform, inspire, and empower millions

of outdoor recreationists. The company's suite of navigation apps includes three products — onX Hunt, onX Offroad, and onX Backcountry — each tailored to the adventure at hand.

The apps put 852 million acres of public land, 550,000 miles of motorized trails, 10,000 detailed hikes and routes, 60,000 campgrounds and cabins, hundreds of layers and more at users' fingertips.

"What sets onX apart is our ability to create products that empower recreationists to explore new landscapes and unite them to protect access to our natural world," said Laura Orvidas, onX CEO. "It's this combination that fuels our impressive customer traction. This investment positions us to expand our offerings even further and continue changing the way outdoor enthusiasts



experience the world around them."

onX has committed a percentage of its app sales to increase access to 150,000 acres of public land and to help build or restore 150 miles of trails by the end of 2023. To reach this goal, onX offers grants to organizations that help preserve and create access to outdoor adventures.

The company also lends its data analysis and research to support key legislation, and brings together different perspectives to find creative solutions to protect our shared spaces. / onxmaps.com



LANGDON TACTICAL LTT RDO

LANGDON TACTICAL DUTY RDO SELECTED BY L.A. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Langdon Tactical Technology (LTT) Inc. announced the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) has approved the company's newly launched LTT RDO sight solution on Beretta 92 pistols for duty use department-wide.

Langdon's RDO selection by the LASD comes after more than two years of testing, including multiple deputies extensively evaluating the LTT slides over several thousand rounds. LASD deputies found Langdon's RDO solution to be safe, effective and of high quality.

"This decision by LASD solidifies not just LTT's position in the pistol red-dot market, but sends a message industry-wide about the future of handgun optics," said Ernest Langdon, president of LTT. "We're looking forward to working with LASD and their deputies as we introduce our Duty RDO pistols for the L.E. and commercial markets."

The LTT Duty RDO optic solution is currently offered only for a duty-approved Elite LTT 9. Langdon also offers 92 RDO slides for L.E. officers or individuals who already have a 92 series pistol and want to add its optic capability. / langdontactical.com



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SCI ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH TROPHY SCAN

Safari Club International (SCI), promoters of hunting and wildlife conservation worldwide, announced a partnership with Trophy Scan, a revolutionary 3D technology used to scan, score and replicate trophy game species. The Trophy Scan system is endorsed by SCI as an official method of measurement.

Trophy Scan's patented scoring and measuring software represents the latest and most advanced trophy game-measuring and scoring toolset ever developed. Safari Club encourages hunters to use the patented process to generate a 3D model that determines the SCI score of their trophies.

Scans will be confirmed and verified for the record book by an SCI official measurer. Once scanned, hunters not only have a score sheet accurately depicting their game, but they also have a full catalog of commemorative options available from Trophy Scan featuring an exact replica of their trophy.

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"Trophy Scan is the future of measuring game for conservation, for entry into the record book and for preserving the memory of a successful hunt," said W. Laird Hamberlin, CEO of SCI and SCIF. "It not only measures and populates the score sheet according to the SCI methods, but the model also provides an insurance policy for the hunter. All scans are saved and can be used to generate a replica if the trophy is stolen or damaged in any way. This is truly revolutionary, and we are happy to be the first organization to endorse this method," he added. / trophyscan.com / safariclub.org

DO YOU HAVE THE ADVANTAGE?
shootingindustry.com/dealer-advantage

MKS SUPPLY SUPPORTS WALK THE TALK AMERICA

MKS Supply announced it is supporting Walk the Talk America (WTTA) as a corporate partner, helping to promote WTTA's mental health outreach and public education efforts.

MKS Supply is marketer and exclusive distributor for Barnaul ammunition and shooting brands Hi-Point Firearms, Inland Manufacturing and Full Forge Gear. All Hi-Point firearms ship with a WTTA information card, and the company supports WTTA charity events with donated firearms. The most recent charity auction included a Hi-Point C9 pistol, Hi-Point .45 carbine and Full Forge Gear double pistol bag and backpack.

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, WTTA has a straightforward yet challenging mission: to reduce firearm suicides and other negative incidents associated with firearms ownership through formal education, outreach and engagement with the mental health and firearms communities.



As a result of a new partnership with WTTA, every Hi-Point firearm ships with a mental health information card. Owners can visit WTTA.org/LOVE for a free, anonymous mental health screening.

MKS Supply and its associated brands are assisting WTTA's efforts to educate mental health professionals about America's firearm culture and beliefs, as well as providing an elementary understanding of firearm handling, operation and storage through classroom instruction and live-fire exercises.

The company also supports WTTA's mission to destigmatize mental illness on an individual level through educational outreach alongside others in the firearms community. This effort aims to help those in critical need feel comfortable seeking

help from mental health professionals.

WTTA provides firearm industry members from manufacturers to retailers with insert and point-of-purchase materials that offer critical first-step guidance and screening resources. WTTA also provides a free downloadable slide show to help firearm instructors discuss mental health awareness with their students, and to provide actionable resources for those in need.

[/mkssupply.com](http://mkssupply.com)
[/walkthetalkamerica.org](http://walkthetalkamerica.org)

WINCHESTER DEBUTS EDUCATIONAL AMMO SERIES

Winchester announced the launch of its Introduction to Ammunition — Ammo 101 series. The four-part series includes custom illustrations and information on rifle, pistol, rimfire and shotshell ammunition.

"The basics of ammunition — that is what we want to deliver with the Ammo 101 series," said Matt Campbell, VP of sales and marketing. "With millions of people across the United States starting their journey in the shooting sports as new firearm owners, providing easy-to-understand information on ammunition types is one way we can help educate our customers."

The Ammo 101 series provides a basic overview of shotshell, centerfire rifle, centerfire pistol and rimfire ammunition, showcasing ammunition construction, components, calibers and common usage.

The instructional series is free to download, and will be especially



valuable to the many shooting ranges and instructors nationwide who are introducing consumers to the shooting sports and hunting.

To access Ammo 101, click on Sell Sheets at Winchester.mediaassets.com.

For custom posters, metal signage or questions on printing and sizing, Winchester offers a printing resource available through REPCO Solutions.
[/winchester.com](http://winchester.com)



SAAMI DEVELOPS SUPPRESSOR THREAD-AND- SOCKET DRAWINGS, ADDS MEMBER

The Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute Inc. (SAAMI) announced it has developed suppressor thread-and-socket drawings, and has made them publicly available, without restriction, on its website. The drawings are part of SAAMI's ongoing project to develop standards for firearm suppressors.

"With suppressors gaining in popularity among recreational shooters, SAAMI is leading the way in developing technical and compatibility guidelines for manufacturing this equipment," said Joe Bartozzi, SAAMI president and CEO. "I am proud of the SAAMI team for developing and making this resource publicly available."

The development of new suppressor thread-and-socket drawings aligns with SAAMI's overall mission to create manufacturing standards that serve industry interests of compatibility, reliability and interchangeability. By creating a uniform set of guidelines for both the threads on the muzzle and the internal socket of the suppressor, or other attached device, manufacturers and users can be assured devices compliant to the standards will work together.

Additionally, SAAMI announced a new affiliate member: TXAT LLC, exclusive U.S. distributor and test facility for Aguila Ammunition, headquartered in Houston.

As an affiliate member, TXAT will have full access to SAAMI firearms and ammunition technical standards, as well as SAAMI's reference ammunition program assessments. This status also lets TXAT customers know they support the work SAAMI does throughout the industry to uphold the safety of participants of the shooting sports.

[/saami.org](http://saami.org)

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ORCHID NAMED 2022 TOP RETAIL POS, PAYMENT SOLUTIONS PROVIDER

Orchid LLC, provider of FFL technology, payment processing and compliance services, was recognized as a top retail POS and payment solutions provider for the second consecutive year by *Retail Tech Insights*.

The publication's annual awards are given to 10 top companies at the forefront of providing retail solutions and impacting their respective industries.

"In a highly regulated, tight-margin industry such as ours, FFLs are seeking solutions they can count on to keep them compliant and save money. These awards are only further proof of the strong reputation Orchid has gained as a trusted retail partner and developer of firearms-friendly solutions," said Shaun Phelan, Orchid VP of sales and implementation.

Orchid POS offers firearm retailers a robust, cloud-based, point-of-sale system with native e-commerce, digital storage, A&D bound book and various hardware integrations. Orchid's systems allow dealer FFLs to easily manage online and on-hand inventory, track sales and recurring



membership billing, issue and accept gift cards, create gunsmith work orders, send marketing communications and more.

Integrated with Orchid POS, Orchid Pay provides simple, affordable, non-restrictive payment processing for both brick-and-mortar and online firearm merchants. With low fixed rates, a price-lock guarantee with no contract and versatile swipe, dip and tap card devices, retailers can keep more of what they earn, pass more savings on to consumers and improve the checkout experience.

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

SCOPE CLX LAUNCHES WITH 500-PLUS STORES CONTRIBUTING DATA

The NASGW announced the full launch of SCOPE CLX, a platform that analyzes retail sales to empower shooting sports businesses. SCOPE CLX is a weekly sample of more than 500 stores reporting anonymously through leading point-of-sale software partners, including Coreware, Celerant, AIM and Orchid POS.

“Our industry has been craving deeper insight into consumer buying behavior and competitor performance. SCOPE CLX is a great complement to NASGW existing programs that offer shooting sports businesses a macro and micro look at product performance. Most importantly,

this initiative has brought our industry together around a common mission to improve data standards and access,” said Easton Kuboushek, NASGW director of data programs.

SCOPE first launched five years ago as a source of distributor sales and inventory data, now known as SCOPE DLX. In 2021, DLX tracked approximately 65% of the firearms market through distribution shipments. In the past two years, SCOPE has expanded to include an industry-wide product data standardization and distribution tool in SCOPE PLX, now adding the full launch of the consumer data platform in SCOPE CLX.

The CLX data sample of 500 stores is the largest available, and represents a nearly identical geographic distribution to NICS checks and SCOPE DLX shipments, making it a trusted source.



“SCOPE CLX is truly a huge step for NASGW and the SCOPE platform,” said Kenyon Gleason, president of NASGW. “Now users can follow industry trends from the distribution channel right through to the retail level, creating a powerful way to analyze the market. Users will certainly have more insight on their product performance, market share and consumer demand.”

SCOPE CLX is currently available to NASGW members as an upgrade to the existing SCOPE DLX platform.

[/ nasgwscope.org](https://nasgwscope.org)

SHOOT UNITED HOSTS RANGE EVENT EXPERIENCES

Shoot United launched a series of events in August (National Shooting Sports Month) in partnership with local shooting ranges to help those just starting their journey in the shooting sports and responsible firearm ownership. Participants had access to knowledgeable trainers, received educational resources and experienced firearms firsthand on the shooting range.

Shoot United’s mission is to drive awareness and activate new participants to the sport by sharing engaging and educational content, as well as providing resources where people can learn how to participate in the shooting sports and hunting activities.

“The first Shoot United events included participants with diverse backgrounds who were curious and excited to learn more about topics in the shooting sports,” said Jason Gilbertson, director of marketing for Shoot United. “The environment was not intimidating. It was inviting, and people of all experience levels learned and experienced firearms in very positive ways.”

Shoot United hosted more than 130 people at ranges in select metropolitan areas throughout the country for its



Attendees of Shoot United’s Range Event series get hands-on instruction in everything from pistols to long guns. (Image: Shoot United)

inaugural events. Focusing on an introduction to handgun training at The Modern Sportsman event allowed for a small-group instructional session with one-on-one range time. At the Hyatt Farms Shooting Complex event, all three disciplines of firearms (shotgun, handgun and rifle) were featured, giving new shooters the opportunity to explore different firearms in a safe, supportive environment.

Each event provided new participants an opportunity to ask questions of certified firearm instructors and professional competitive shooters. They had fun with friends and family while also getting safe, supportive, hands-on experience.

Range owners interested in hosting future Shoot United events can reach out via email to media@shootunited.com.

[/ shootunited.com](https://shootunited.com)



After a successful Fly-In, DC Project delegates assembled on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court to promote the message of "Gun rights are human rights" to Congress and those visiting Washington, D.C.

DC PROJECT CONTINUES ADVOCACY, EDUCATION EFFORTS

The DC Project, Women for Gun Rights, returned to Washington, D.C., September 13–16, to deliver its core message and educational efforts to members of Congress.

The group's 51 delegates representing 48 states met with legislators from both sides of the aisle, advocating for gun rights as human rights. Their effort concluded with a rally on the steps of the Supreme Court.

"This was our fifth fly-in, and it was the most impactful trip we have experienced. We built bridges by sharing our personal and emotional stories of violence, while emphasizing solutions the firearms industry is spearheading in mental health, school safety and

firearms education," said Dianna Muller, founder of The DC Project.

The Congressional Second Amendment Caucus, co-chaired by Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.) and Rep. Thomas Massie (R-Ky.), hosted a reception, where The DC Project delegates presented the group's pillars and explained how legislators can partner with the group to carry its mission forward.

The DC Project delegates attended more than 135 meetings, and interacted with many residents and tourists. The group anticipates continuing the momentum at the state level.

The DC Project is committed to safeguarding the Second Amendment and gun rights as human rights. A non-partisan initiative of daughters, mothers and sisters, the group advocates for education as the key to firearm safety and violence prevention rather than legislation. / dcproject.info

TRADITIONS LAUNCHES REDESIGNED WEBSITE

Traditions Performance Firearms has launched a redesigned website. The site features upgraded images and graphics, a more modern streamlined look, improved navigation and an enhanced dealer locator.

Traditions' website offers detailed information on the company's full line of products and serves as a resource for customers before and after their purchase. With an extensive how-to library, load resources, suggested accessories, product announcements



and more, the website is a hub for all things Traditions.

"We're thrilled to launch our redesigned website," said Alison Hall, Traditions marketing manager. "Those visiting the site will enjoy lifestyle graphics and product highlights along with enhanced customer experience features. Traditions continues to prioritize investment into key elements of our business and brand."

/ traditionsfirearms.com **SI**

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A. CHALK

Outdoor Sports & Recreation Insurance Advances VP, Underwriter

Outdoor Sports & Recreation Insurance (OSR)/Great Southern Agency announced the promotions of Angie Chalk to VP of operations and compliance standards, and Julie Buice to Underwriter I.

"Angie has shown exceptional qualities in the development of our firearms program and assuring compliance functionality. Great things happen in our group with great people such as Angie," said John Paulk, principal owner.

Prior to joining Great Southern Agency in 2020, Chalk spent 16 years as an operations analyst for Safehold Special Risk Inc.

With 20 years' experience in insurance and underwriting, Buice joined OSR in 2020 as an underwriting assistant before promoting to Underwriter I.

"Julie has shown a definite compassion to learn and develop her underwriting skills in all aspects of our firearms insurance program as well as giving our agents great service," Paulk noted.



H. DUNBAR

Celerant Technology Adds To Marketing Team

Celerant welcomed Digital Marketing Manager Hannah Dunbar and Digital Marketing Coordinator Bryant Ellis to its team.

"Both Hannah and Bryant will bring a fresh, new perspective to all aspects of our communications," stated Michele Salerno, Celerant marketing director, assistant VP. "Moving forward, our existing dealers will have even more visibility into all that is made available to them via our point



B. ELLIS

of sale and eCommerce software, from initiatives such as our client portals, virtual client conferences, online knowledge base and more."

Based in Florida, Dunbar will manage digital marketing and outbound initiatives. Prior to Celerant, she was a content marketing and social media manager.

Ellis previously worked as a graphic designer and will now focus on enhancing communications to new and existing dealers from his Wisconsin office.



K. STAPLES

Primary Arms Names E-Comm VP

Kody Staples joined Primary Arms as VP of e-commerce and inbound marketing. He will

oversee Primary Arms' digital sales channels and e-commerce marketplaces, with responsibilities over content and editorial teams as well as business analytics, email marketing and search engine optimization.

"Kody's experience and career successes reflect his unique expertise in high-level e-commerce," said Marshall Lerner, founder and CEO of Primary Arms.

Most recently, Staples served as senior director of marketing and e-commerce strategy at Truck Hero. He also gained experience from roles at Overstock.com and Kohl's Department Stores.

Staples earned a degree from Brigham Young University.



D. MCCARTNEY

Big Rock Sports Announces President

David McCartney was named president of Big Rock Sports and has assumed responsibility for the day-to-day management of the outdoor sporting goods distribution company.

McCartney spent nearly 30

years with General Parts Inc. (now Advance Auto Parts), where he served as president of the Carquest division.

Ed Small, Big Rock Sports CEO, stated, "[McCartney's] extensive knowledge of distribution and his experience serving small, family-owned businesses will be a tremendous asset that will help us continue providing best-in-class product assortments and service to our family of retailers."

McCartney earned a B.A. in management from North Carolina State University.



I. MEISLER

Headrest Safe Company Names CEO

The Headrest Safe Company announced company Founder Irving Meisler is now serving as CEO.

As the CEO, he leads the team and works closely with product engineers to see his ideas come to fruition.

Prior to founding the Headrest Safe Company in his retirement, Meisler enjoyed a successful career in real estate development and construction.

He earned a degree in finance from the University of Alabama.



A. REED

Military Products Inc. Taps Marketing Director

Military Products Inc. welcomed Andrea Reed as the company's marketing communications

director.

Reed brings more than 20 years of marketing experience to the role and will lead the new Retail Promotional program supporting Military Products' professional retailers.

"Andrea brings an excellent reputation for performance to this role, and we know she will be a tremendous asset for helping to grow our capabilities," said David Nau, president of Military Products Inc.



TrueTimber Selects Licensing Director

Richard Howard recently joined TrueTimber as director of licensing. He oversees licensing and implementing strategies to expand the TrueTimber brand and steer licensed products into new opportunities and markets both domestically and internationally.

TrueTimber CEO Rusty Sellars said, "Richard has a ton of experience within the outdoor industry and with camo specifically, so his value to the brand and our partners is very high. We are thrilled to add him to our extremely talented team."

Howard has over 24 years of

licensing and sales experience working within the outdoor industry with multiple key brands.



K. CAMPBELL



M. MARTIN

Otis Technology Promotes/ Recruits Sales Team

Otis Technology announced several promotions within the sales organization and welcomed two members to its inside sales and customer service team.

"We couldn't be more excited with these changes," stated Bill Kleftis, CEO of

Otis Technology. "How fortunate that we were able to leverage our own employees and position them and the

organization for continued growth."

Kenda Campbell was promoted to director of commercial sales where she is responsible for overseeing the entire commercial sales division as well as Otis' sales representative agencies.

In her new role as commercial sales manager, Mollie Martin will focus on commercial sales for the Eastern U.S., and oversee the inside sales and customer service teams.

The inside sales and customer service teams added Danielle Larsen and Jared Bonney to the team.

Larsen, a recent hire in customer service, is now serving as a sales associate. Bonney, who joined Otis' manufacturing department two years ago, is now a customer service representative. **SI**



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BY MASSAD AYOUB

SELLING REVOLVERS TO WOMEN (AND OTHERS)

In Shooting Industry's August 2022 "Range Issue," the *Letters to the Editor* page carried a note from gun dealer Steven Hamilton, saying he appreciated the column I had written for the June 2022 issue ("Relics Or Rescue Tools? Revolvers Are Booming"). Hamilton noted he'd had particular success selling revolvers to female customers, and suggested I do a follow-up column on the topic. Editor Jade Moldae replied this could indeed be done ... and here it is.

REVOLVERS HAVE "NOTHING TO HIDE"

Women have constituted a much larger than usual percentage of the first-time gun buyers who have been flooding gun shops since the pandemic began, according to most dealers I've interviewed on the topic.

First-time gun users of either gender are leery of complicated machinery, particularly if the equipment in question is something they perceive as "a killing machine." They've been falsely told by anti-gunners a gun is more likely to kill its owners than to protect them. An auto pistol hides the cartridges inside it from view, for the most part. By contrast — except for .22s and other revolvers with counterbored chambers — a glance at a revolver from the side will show whether or not there are cartridge case

rims in its cylinder.

Unloading an auto, one has to be sure the sequence is "remove magazine, then eject chambered round." If done backwards, there's a "torpedo in the launch tube" of a pistol its new owner *thinks* is empty. Clearing the chamber itself can be a chore for someone who doesn't have a significant amount of hand and arm strength, and it's understood most females have less upper body strength than most males. This is why we have a generation of pistols typified by the Smith & Wesson "EZ" series, the Ruger LC380 and more whose key selling point is easier slide manipulation in weaker hands.

The double-action revolver with swing-out cylinder takes those concerns pretty much off the table. Pull back on the cylinder latch of a Colt or Armscor; press in on a Ruger's; press forward on the latch of a Charter Arms, Taurus, Smith & Wesson or Rossi. Holding the latch in this position, use your fingers to swing the cylinder out. Empty chambers or live cartridges, the "ammo supply section" of the firearm is both visible and palpable. Easy-peasy, very little strength required. Press the ejector rod and live rounds or spent casings alike are lifted out of the chambers.

The revolver, one might say, has nothing to hide.

Speaking of which, the revolver

◀ Revolvers have wide-ranging appeal. During a recent Shoot Like A Girl (SLG) team range day event, hosted by Upper Canyon Outfitters in Montana, the 3" Colt Python emerged as a favorite for SLG Archery Instructor Chelsey Petit. (Image: Shoot Like A Girl)

offers a little known and seldom appreciated advantage when a suspect is taken at gunpoint. Here's a sales tip: You might want to remind the customer those cartridges in the chambers are also visible "from the business end!"

Aim a plastic pistol at a hardened felon, especially one with a visible molding line in the frame, and it's not inconceivable the thug might delude himself into believing it's a toy. Level your most expensive 1911 .45 at him, and he won't be sure if it contains live ammo or cobwebs leftover from World War I.

But when he's looking at a drawn and leveled revolver from the front, the bullet noses of live ammo are pointing at him and assuring him, *this gun is real, it's loaded and the intended victim isn't bluffing with something that can't hurt him.*

“

Spellcheck doesn't recognize the word 'shootability' — but shooters do. It's the ability to reliably deliver fast, accurate hits on target.

SHOOTABILITY

Spellcheck doesn't recognize the word "shootability" — but shooters do. It's the ability to reliably deliver fast, accurate hits on target. Here's where small, lightweight revolvers in .38 Special or larger come up short: Their short sight radius doesn't help accuracy, and it's not uncommon to find a 14-lb. trigger pull on a 14 oz. revolver! This isn't the best formula for good hits delivered quickly.

How to compensate? First, some revolvers will have lighter, smoother trigger pulls than others. Colt's current iteration of the Cobra series and Ruger's LCR series are among the winners in this regard.

But — let's look at "threat profiles." A whole lot more women than men are more concerned with being sexually assaulted than they are with being robbed. Sexual assault, by definition, occurs at contact distance. A short-barrel revolver has some huge advantages in an entangled, direct-contact struggle.

“

**Ease of loading/
unloading
with arthritic
or otherwise
weakened hands
can be a selling
point to people of
all ages and
genders, but
particularly the
elderly.**

As the great Henry Fitzgerald noted almost 100 years ago, a snub-nose revolver with a decent grip is possibly the most difficult gun for a strong male assailant to wrest away from a smaller, physically weaker intended victim. The victim has more to hang onto than the attacker who grabs the barrel. Decades of teaching weapon retention and disarming have shown me Fitzgerald was right. (Small pocket autos don't give the attacker much to grab, but don't give the defender much to hang onto, either.)

Moreover, "contact distance" may necessitate a "contact shot." Press-contact will push most auto pistols out of battery and render them unshootable; not so with the revolver. Remember, at press contact, muzzle blast is directed into the homicidal attacker's body, significantly magnifying wound effect.

Before we leave the subject of shootability, we have to address the matter of recoil. I'd advise against .357 Magnum ammo in a small, light wheelgun. Ace gun writer Tamara Keel is a strong, athletically built woman who stands 6' tall, and she prefers a .32 Magnum to even .38 Special, let alone .357. A growing number of credentialed experts, such as Chuck Haggard, recommend the mid-range .38 Special wadcutter target load for self-defense with small, light revolvers. Recoil is relatively mild, and the flat-nosed wadcutter bullet cuts a full-diameter wound path. Keep some in stock if you're selling featherweight .38 snubs. (Heck, those loads can work in larger .38s and 357s, too.)

NOT JUST FOR WOMEN

Let's not forget a lot of folks of both genders appreciate the above-mentioned revolver features. Ease of loading/unloading with arthritic or otherwise weakened hands can be a selling point to people of all ages and genders, but particularly the elderly.

The profile of a spurless-hammer revolver, or a "hammerless" or hammer shrouded one make it easier to quickly retrieve them from a pants pocket. Such revolvers, particularly those with enclosed hammers, can be fired through coat pockets. They can also be fired through briefcases or handbags of suitable size.

Revolvers are seen by some as "girl guns" and/or "geezer guns," but they have broader appeal than that. Among serious shooters, we're seeing a ripple of renaissance of the double-action revolver, whose long pull teaches shooters to distribute trigger pressure and shoot better with the autoloaders they otherwise prefer.

They may not be the bestsellers in the gun shop, but revolvers sure ain't ready for the museum yet. **SI**



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ARMS & THE WOMAN



BY ASHLEY MCGEE

WHAT WOMEN REALLY WANT

It's hard to believe the holiday shopping season is upon us. This year, U.S. holiday retail sales are expected to reach \$1.3 trillion,¹ a 3.3% increase over 2021.

When doing research for this article, I stumbled upon an even more interesting statistic. According to a survey of 2,000 American women conducted by OnePoll, the average woman surveyed has felt disappointed by 42% of the presents they've received in their lives so far. It's not surprising, considering how many firearms instructors have said women show up for classes with a gun they aren't comfortable with because a spouse or significant other bought it without giving her the opportunity to try it first.

To help, we reached out to several women in the firearms community to ask what products they've been loving or what's on their own personal wish list this holiday season. Instead of making assumptions about what women want, your staff can offer gift ideas for products that have actually been tested by women themselves.

GUNS & SAFES

Mia Anstine, a hunting guide, writer, podcast host and instructor, said she has many carry guns, but her most recent

favorite purchase is the Kimber Micro 9 (MSRP \$735).

"With the amount of time I spend outdoors, I'm a fan of stainless. So of course, that's what I ordered. I like the heft of the springs in the Kimber semi-autos," she said. "The Micro 9 is easy to conceal. I also carry a SIG P365, Remington RM380, Kimber K6s and others. The firearm varies depending on my outfit and which holsters I have to go with it."

The most commonly recommended pistol, however, was the Walther PDP F-Series (MSRP \$699). Marketed as the first-ever pistol engineered for the female hand, the F-Series goes far beyond the "pink it and shrink it" method of the past. Women, including Olympic shooter and firearms instructor Gabby Franco, had an active role in designing the full-size 9mm. The result was a firearm designed to fit those with smaller hands and offers lower felt-recoil, improved accuracy due to a longer sight radius, higher magazine capacity and better control.

Natalie Strong of Elegant & Armed said it's currently her favorite full-size gun. Elizabeth Bienas of Casual + Tactical shared this sentiment.

To protect her firearms, Strong recommended the Vaultek LifePod

◀ Tatiana Whitlock runs the Walther PDP-F through its paces on the range. (Image: Walther Arms)

(\$109.99) — a touch-activated capacitive keypad safe that meets TSA guidelines. The LifePod is lightweight at just over 2 lbs., as well as water-resistant, dustproof and airtight. Oh, and it floats.

"I travel a lot, and this goes with me anywhere my gun goes," she said.

For more info: kimberamerica.com/micro-9 • waltherarms.com/pdp-f-series • vaulteksafe.com/products/vaultek-view-all-lifepod-series/lifepod



A gift card to use for a training course or an annual range membership are gifts that keep giving long after the holiday season is over.

CARRY GEAR

On Elegant & Armed, Strong's lifestyle blog and Instagram account created with stylish and safety-conscious women in mind, she shares information on choosing a gun, finding the right holster and learning to dress for concealed carry — which means she's no stranger to carry gear.

"I have two favorite belts — The Groovelife Groove Belt (\$64.95) and Nexbelt Supreme Appendix Black 38mm (\$61.99)," she said.

In her blog post, "Best Concealed Carry Belts for Women," Strong wrote, "The Groove Belt is without a doubt the stretchiest and most comfortable. Although it's very rigid, it also offers the most flexibility, allowing you to move without feeling constrained."

About the Nexbelt, she wrote, "When it comes to most structured, this belt takes the cake. The nylon belt comes in one long band, which you cut to your desired size using the markings provided. It features a ratchet system that allows you to get the ideal fit and

helps to avoid the appearance of a muffin top.”

Though she stresses finding the right fit depends on several factors such as what you like to wear, your body type, the gun you use, your lifestyle, etc., her holster pick was the Bravo Concealment Torsion IWB Gun Holster (\$40.99).

“The style of the clip helps tuck the grip of the gun close to my body, which helps conceal the firearm,” she said.

Even when carrying a firearm on body, she carries the Natalie Concealed Carry Purse (\$219.99), which she designed in collaboration with Cameleon Handbags. Made from smooth, high-quality leather, the purse includes a secret pocket containing a nylon holster to store your firearm. The soft lining and plastic zipper are designed for a comfortable draw, and the two zippers allow for an ambidextrous draw.

“It makes a great backup holster, which I sometimes need in a public restroom or dressing room.”

For more info: groovelife.com/products/groove-belt-black-black • nexusbelt.com/products/supreme-appendix-black-38mm • bravoconcealment.com/products/torsion-iwb-holster • cameleonbags.com/products/natalie

TRAINING GEAR

As a women’s concealed carry educator, Elizabeth Bienas advocates proper and continued training is a must for any responsible firearms owner. Far too many women are gifted a gun by their spouse, significant other or parent, only for it to sit in their nightstand or glovebox.

The MantisX Laser Academy Training System (\$99 to \$249) is great for keeping dry-fire interesting and effective,” said Bienas. “I also really like the Dry Fire Pillow from Armed In Style (\$29.99) — a training tool that can match your decor.”

When she hits the range for live-fire training, she uses the UpLULA Maglula — a military-grade, pocket-size, universal pistol magazine loader and unloader designed to load and unload virtually all 9mm up to .45 ACP single- and double-stack magazines of

all manufacturers. It also loads most .380 ACP single- and double-stack magazines, and 1911 magazines.

“It’s great for loading mags fast and saving my nails,” Bienas said.

A gift card to use for a training course or an annual range membership are gifts that keep giving long after the holiday season is over.

For more info: mantisx.com/collections/x-systems • armedinstyle.com/collections/dry-fire-pillows • maglula.com/product/uplula-9mm-to-45acp



Consumers are predicted to shop earlier this year. Due to inventory and supply chain issues, more and more shoppers purchased holiday items in early November during the past two years.

BOOKS & OTHER GIFTS

Even though the above recommendations did come from women in the firearms industry, it doesn’t mean they’re going to work for every woman. Firearms and carry gear are very subjective to the operator, so for the holiday season, consider stocking more universal items.

On her list of must-haves for women who carry concealed, Bienas highly recommends Gavin De Becker’s book, *The Gift of Fear*.

“It’s a great book for learning to spot signs of danger and listen to your intuition,” she said.

For those who opt to purchase a store or range gift card for the woman in their life, another great suggestion is to pair it with Casual + Tactical’s

Women’s Guide to Concealed Carry e-book. This is an especially good option to go along with an e-gift card for last-minute shoppers or anyone who wants to avoid shipping costs or delays.

For those looking for stocking stuffer ideas, two items on Natalie Strong’s wish list are the Cozy Gun Socks (\$12) and Gun Paper Clips (\$12) from Armed in Style.

For more info: giftoffear.com/book • casualandtactical.com/shop/p/wgtcc • armedinstyle.com

HOLIDAY SHOPPING PREDICTIONS

At this point, it’s likely too late to add most of these items to your inventory if you don’t have them in stock or on order already. However, there are other things you can do to prepare.

Consumers are predicted to shop earlier this year. Due to inventory and supply chain issues, more and more shoppers purchased holiday items in early November during the past two years. According to Salesforce research, 37% more people in the U.S. plan to start buying gifts earlier — citing inflation as the primary motivating factor driving early purchases.² Don’t wait until Black Friday or December to start your planned promotions.

Consumer insights from Think with Google also indicate 83% of U.S. shoppers who visited a store in the past week said they used online research before going into a store.³

If you haven’t already, now is the time to make sure your website is up to date and performing well. Don’t forget to also verify your hours of operation, address, phone number and other contact information on your Google My Business listing and any other directory sites like Yelp.

And if your store has a social media presence, make sure you have a clear strategy and posting schedule to carry you into the new year. **SI**

Footnotes:

1. insiderintelligence.com/content/us-holiday-2021-review-holiday-2022-preview
2. salesforce.com/blog/holiday-shopping-predictions
3. thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/consumer-trends/store-visit-after-online-research-data

BEST PRACTICES



BY BRENNA MCCOUBREY

BECOME PART OF YOUR COMMUNITY THREAD

Oftentimes, when we think of “community” we envision our surrounding neighborhoods, schools, police and fire departments, libraries, city halls and — sure — a few towns may have what they know to be their local gun shop. All of these places have a known purpose: your neighborhood is typically where you live, school is where children go to learn, facilities for first responders, your local government and so on.

When we think of our “local gun shop” is it just for those who shoot guns, already know about firearms and hunt? How do gun shops and shooting ranges play a part in their communities? It’s time to shift the mindset of every gun shop being a dark and scary place to a welcoming, friendly and safe environment where our communities can learn about shooting sports, hunting and home and personal protection.

There’s no question first-time gun ownership has skyrocketed, but where are these new gun owners now? When entering a store where you seemingly know nothing about the product being sold, it can be incredibly intimidating. Many of these purchases were fueled by the devastation of the projected economy, then protests and fear of a very uncertain future for their communities. While these reasons for purchasing firearms are valid, it raises concerns about responsible

gun ownership and safety. We cannot expect “panic buyers” to immediately understand the concepts previously mentioned and why they’re so important.

As range operators and dealers, we have a unique opportunity to immerse ourselves within the community and reengage with these first-time gun owners. However, being in the firearms industry, we naturally have a target on our backs (pun intended). So, how do we get out from behind the counter and show the residents of our towns and cities we’re a resource for safety and protection, and should very well be considered a staple in community threads across the country?

WHERE TO BEGIN

Your local chamber of commerce can be an invaluable asset for new connections. The people who make up your local chamber are incredibly resourceful and are proud to bring professionals together by developing networking events and opportunities for businesses to share ideas, cross-promote and support one another.

One of the best ways to dive right into this and show the current chamber members who you are and what your business is all about is hosting a networking event. Most chambers have some sort of “Open House” or “Business After Hours” event where

◀ Guests at White Birch Armory’s Ladies’ Night (held the first Wednesday of each month) enjoy range time with female instructors, learn about new products and develop a sense of community with like-minded women. Events like this will help your store or range connect better with the community.

companies have an opportunity to open their storefront, offices and facilities to show attendees what it is they do day to day. These networking events are organized with a professional from the local chamber and are often a “speed-dating” type of networking exercise that offers intimate conversations with other businesses you may not otherwise have a reason to communicate with. Getting to know other local business owners allows you to connect on a much more personal level and open doors for your businesses to collaborate.

“

A simple way to spread brand awareness in your area is to find an event that aligns with your company’s values.

As the networking host, you can welcome guests or thank them for coming and give a quick highlight on what you offer to the community and how you can be of service to them and vice versa. *Perhaps they’re looking for a team-building exercise. Did they ever consider a shooting range?* Consider offering a discount on a safety course; there very well could be some attendees who purchased a firearm in recent years and weren’t sure what to do next.

At initial meet-and-greets, keep the selling aside — for now. Inviting those who make up your local community without any intention of selling them products or range time is a simple way to allow them the chance to know the people behind the sign out front.

INVITE FIRST RESPONDERS ONTO THE RANGE

Many L.E. departments across the country have ranges to train and conduct their yearly qualifications. However, you can still find ways to connect with your community's first responders and offer your services as a gun shop and/or range.

Grab a few members of your team, a handful of brochures, stickers and maybe a couple of branded hats for a visit to surrounding departments and invite active-duty law enforcement to come in and use the range for free. This humanizes your business and gives your store a personal connection with the community.

By way of doing this, not only is your business establishing a professional relationship with local first responders (which can be beneficial in many other areas), but it also gives them an opportunity to continue to train in a safe environment between qualifications. It's also a way of saying "thank you" and supporting local first responders so they feel comfortable and welcome. Open your doors and invite them to decompress in your conference room or member lounge if you have one. You can also offer your classroom to host seminars surrounding public safety and situational awareness the public can relate to. This is a great opportunity to see if a law enforcement officer would be interested in speaking to the community in an intimate setting and offers them the chance to connect with those they serve every day.

Let's be honest: You can never have too many L.E. officers at your store or range. Also, consider having L.E.-only Wi-Fi available at your location. It's great for officers to have a place to write their reports, etc., and having those officers on the third shift sitting in their squad cars at your store is a welcome burglary deterrent.

DONATIONS & SPONSORSHIPS

Through your new connection with the chamber of commerce, you have access to all local community events. A simple way to spread brand awareness in your area is to find an event that aligns with

your company's values. It can be easy to make a financial donation to any organization, but being intentional about your partnerships and sponsorships is a great way to highlight the values that have been the foundation of your business.



Engaging in this genre of activities begins to break down the barriers between pro- and anti-gun members of the community.

Unless everyone in your community is visiting your website and seeing your "About Us" page, the public isn't going to know you as anything but "the local gun dealer in town." Finding a charitable organization or non-profit that aligns with your business's core values is a great way to showcase those pillars to the public.

As a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business, White Birch Armory in Dover, N.H., often sponsors golf tournaments with local veteran organizations and their missions to support veteran healthcare and other life-changing services.

Depending on your level of sponsorship, your logo might be all over the scorecards, on a green or you can offer a welcome bag to golfers with stickers, range passes and other branded items. Also having a physical presence or participating in the golf tournament or event you're sponsoring allows the public to ask you questions directly about the services you offer.

If there isn't a charitable

organization in your area, consider donating raffle items to the chamber's events — which will give your brand and company name exposure. Not only are you marketing your business in a very low-cost strategy, but you're also becoming involved in events that may reach potential customers while supporting another small business.

Engaging in this genre of activities begins to break down the barriers between pro- and anti-gun members of the community. The more you become involved, the more opportunity you have to end the stigma of "the scary gun shop."

ENGAGING THE YOUTH

Our communities wouldn't continue to excel if it weren't for the next generation. Start getting involved in offering kids' programming at the range. There are many seminars and events you can host at your facility to introduce kids to gun safety and shooting sports.

The NSSF is an incredible resource and produces engaging marketing materials around firearm safety you can hand out to families who are purchasing their first home-defense firearm. You can also have these materials printed as supporting items for various topics of seminars — such as how to properly store a firearm, home "fire drills" for children and their families (what to do if there is an intruder in your home), proper gun handling, etc. All of these seminar topics lead to building a foundation for a healthier, safer, well-equipped and prepared community.

Getting involved in your town and city affairs does a lot more than bring business and potential revenue to your store. As representatives of the Second Amendment, we have the responsibility to educate our peers and the next generation of society about our right to bear arms, what responsible gun ownership means and how shooting sports is simply a fun hobby for many. The more we, as dealers and range owners, become involved in our surrounding environment, the more likely the "local gun shop" becomes a staple in what we collectively call "community." **SI**



A YEAR-END BLOWOUT OR TARGETED SALES?

BY TIM BARKER

Get The Most Out Of Big Sales Events & Promotions

Whether it's planning a weekend sales event or big year-end blowout, one of the biggest challenges facing gun stores is finding a way to grab the attention of increasingly distracted customers.

After all, if you walk into any store in the country, you're virtually guaranteed to find something "on sale." Discounting has become so common in the modern retail landscape the word "sale" is threatening to lose any substantial value.

At some point, customers just tune it out, suggests John

Phillips, president of Poway Weapons & Gear (PWG), located north of San Diego.

Putting some muscle back into the word requires creativity and planning. At Poway, this means a heavy focus on weekend events (think GLOCK Days or SIG Days) to attract attention.

"We make them manufacturer-specific so there's a purpose for people to come in," Phillips said.

These events can also drive future marketing efforts. The store uses manufacturers' swag and various discounts to convince customers to share an email address and cell phone number.

"Instead of just giving everything away at a discounted rate, we're getting something in return from the customer. We're getting their marketing information," he explained.

Larger storewide sales are reserved for weekends around Memorial Day, Labor Day and Black Friday — the sales customers are programmed to expect. More frequent are "flash sales" on specific items.

"These are more emotionally driven, with people racing in to get it because they think there's only so much of it and it's going to go away quickly," Phillips pointed out.

Black Wing Shooting Center in Delaware, Ohio, focuses on specific customer interests instead of trying to devise sales with broad appeal. The facility, for

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"Instead of just giving everything away at a discounted rate, we're getting something in return from the customer. We're getting their marketing information."

*John Phillips, President
 Poway Weapons & Gear, Poway, Calif.*

example, has a strong shotgun customer base — with sporting clays, skeet and trap ranges on site. So, a sale on Benelli shotguns plays well.

"We try to find the type of sales that work for our customers and the types of products they're typically going after," said Co-Owner Mark Gore.

Black Wing promotes a couple of large events each year, including an annual Summer Blast featuring live music, a hog roast and car show. This summer's event included reps from nearly two-dozen brands.

"It's kind of a way for us to try to drive traffic into the store when things are slow," Gore shared.

BE STRATEGIC WITH INVENTORY

Of course, you can't plan a special sales event — where you're expecting a significant increase in foot traffic — without doing some advance inventory planning and deals that will be offered.

One strategy for this is to stock up in the months ahead, grabbing deals as they come along, said Jessica Ulrich, co-owner of Marksman Indoor Range in

Waterloo, Neb.

The shop typically plans several significant events each year, including Black Friday, quarterly "members-only" events and a Christmas in July showcase. To prepare, Ulrich works with distributors to find bulk purchases that will appeal to her customers.

"We really have to be strategic and think at least a quarter ahead," she confirmed.

These events also offer an opportunity to leverage manufacturer incentives on larger purchases, said Phillips in Poway.

"If we know it's something we can turn around, we can certainly take advantage of it and either do it as a flash sale or incorporate it into one of our planned events," he explained.

Even easier is simply using these events to move some existing inventory that doesn't seem eager to leave your shelves, mentioned Gore in Ohio.

"We'll try to focus on the products or the categories where we are overstocked," he said.

GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR RANGE

Few things get customers more excited than the idea of shooting a gun — particularly if it's a gun they don't own and it's cheap (if not free) to shoot. This makes it only natural to include your range in any significant event. It's particularly easy to do if you can get manufacturers to drop by for the day or a weekend. They'll bring a selection of current offerings and maybe even free or discounted ammo.

Think of it as getting customers onto the range for what amounts to a test drive of guns they might later buy, suggests Gore.

"We're trying to make it cheap and easy so they can go in and try stuff," he clarified.

At Marksman Indoor, Ulrich uses the range for a variety of themed competitions. In December, they offer Christmas tree targets. November has turkey targets. And there's the October event where customers compete to shoot faces on paper pumpkins.

To keep things light, the prizes are more about fun than money. The

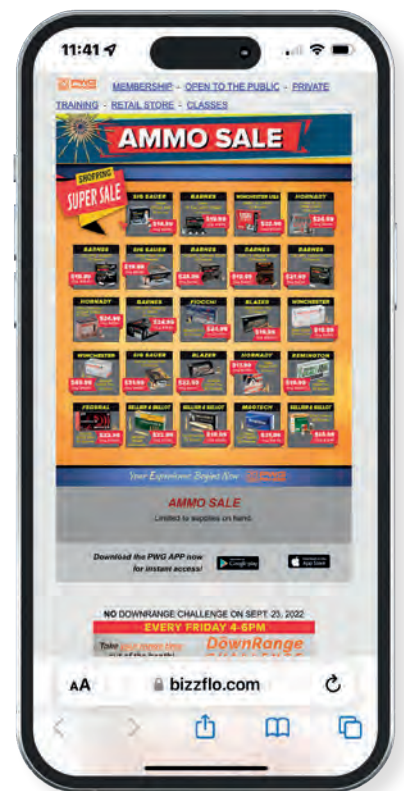
winner of the pumpkin contest, for example, gets a pumpkin pie.

"It keeps everybody coming back," Ulrich said. "It never gets too serious when you keep the prizes light."

Even if you don't have a range, it doesn't mean you can't introduce some fun into your events. Poway has a couple of spinning wheels (one sits on a desktop and the other stands about 6' tall) they break out for promotional events. Customers spin the wheel to win prizes — mostly T-shirts, water bottles and the like. The cost? The customer's email address or cell phone number.

"You'd be amazed at what people will give away in terms of marketing information in order to win a T-shirt or a pen," Phillips confirmed.

He pointed to marketing statistics that value a customer's contact information at \$17. So, if they have 100 people sign up to spin the wheel, it's \$1,700 worth of marketing data.



While promoting a sale on ammo this fall, PWG made a cross-section of loads available from big-name brands.



Combining a manufacturer-specific day — such as a special SIG SAUER weekend at PWG in this instance — with a spin wheel to win prizes (in exchange for marketing information) fuels both in-store excitement and grows a store's email list.



To drive interest from members, The Marksman Indoor Range hosts quarterly member-only events, such as a jack-o'-lantern shootout. It gives them another reason to send rounds downrange, and have fun while doing it.

"I'm perfectly willing to give that away in products and manufacturer swag," he added.

ENCOURAGE MANUFACTURER INVOLVEMENT

Poway hosts a half-dozen or so events during the summer months

featuring different manufacturers, including GLOCK, SIG SAUER and Smith & Wesson. Company reps bring an assortment of guns, swag and, possibly, free ammo.

The guns are particularly appealing for customers in California, which severely restricts the models that can be sold in the state. Customers get to shoot guns that aren't on the state's approved roster. The events also allow the store to tap into the manufacturers' own marketing power, with brand-loyal customers traveling from outside the store's normal customer base.

"It's a great opportunity to introduce the range and the facility to people who may not have been here before," Phillips said. "We typically see a 20–40% increase in sales every weekend we host one of the manufacturers."

It's easier to grab the attention of manufacturers when you have a large store in or near a major metro area. Without this benefit, stores may need to get more creative in drawing a crowd large enough to convince manufacturers it's worth their time and effort to participate.

"You can still go out and have a barbecue in the parking lot," Phillips shared. "The whole point is to bring more people in so you can grow into a bigger store."

Black Wing, in Ohio, involves

manufacturers in both its annual Summer Blast and a month-long anniversary celebration in October featuring different gunmakers every weekend. They work ahead of time with reps, keeping them in the loop with event planning. By doing so, the store has a better chance of grabbing extra products and giveaways to use for promotions.

A key to working with manufacturers is understanding what they want from the relationship. Obviously, they're looking for face time with your customers. However, each of them may have different ideas about how to best accomplish this, Gore said.

"You're getting a lot of people in the store they can talk to. It's what's important to them," he observed. "But there are some companies that want to have the weekend to themselves, and there are some who don't want a competitor there."

SPREADING THE WORD

The relationship between the gun industry and big-tech companies like Facebook is tense, to say the least. But it remains true social media is one of the most effective avenues for reaching customers.

"We've tried every medium: radio, print, TV, everything. But the biggest success we've had is heavy social media," said Phillips, whose Poway store also sees significant returns from email marketing.

With any large event, they start marketing it at least a month ahead, ideally with support from manufacturers. Poway's go-to sites are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and, more recently, the TikTok video platform.

"You've got to follow the social media trends," he advised. "You've got to make new content relevant. You can't get away with just a single picture. Videos with sound or movement get people's attention."

It's difficult to talk about social media without addressing the issue of potential censorship and account suspensions.

It's one of the reasons Poway is active on so many platforms. If the

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**"We try to find
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Mark Gore, Co-Owner
 Black Wing Shooting Center, Delaware, Ohio

store runs afoul of ever-changing rules and gets suspended on one of the sites, it can still reach customers through the others. It also helps, Phillips contends, to entrust all social media communications with a single employee who can keep track of current rules.

Black Wing, in Ohio, focuses most of its social media efforts on Facebook. The company also has tried a variety of traditional media options without much success. What works best for the shop is email, in-store sales flyers and good old-fashioned word of mouth. Getting the latter to work takes some effort.

"You need to get the staff excited about the event and get them on board with spreading the word," Gore informed.

This means more than just putting a flyer in a customer's bag when they check out. Instead, you want your staff to work upcoming events into conversations with customers.

"If they see someone who loves

GLOCKs, let them know the GLOCK rep will be on site," Gore said. "If they're working with someone interested in a CZ, but is still deciding on which model, encourage them to come demo the guns when the rep is in."

For Ulrich, in Nebraska, marketing (via social media and email) is based more on emotions than specific products.

"If you check our social media pages right now, you'll see pictures of fathers and sons shooting a .22 rifle for the first time. You'll see posts about competition with guys shaking hands. You'll see women hugging after knocking down a bowling pin. And you'll see the joy and friendships cultivated through the sport," she expressed. **SI**

Dealers, what year-end events have worked for you? Let the SI team know: comments@shootingindustry.com.

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It's Time To Evolve!

WHY "BUYER" IS AN OUTDATED ROLE

By Hank Yacek

W

hat is a
"Buyer"
in a retail
store?
If you
ask Mr.
Webster, it

sounds like "a person employed to select and purchase stock or materials for a large retail or manufacturing business."

Who wouldn't want this job? Isn't it fun spending someone else's money? But with this responsibility comes an adage: "A buyer needs to have the emotional fortitude to live in the land of 'I bought too much' or 'I bought too few' and never end up buying the right amount."

Point-of-sale systems (POS) of today can help with the process, but even still, it leaves a great deal of "art" in the journey and a lot less "science."

The real trick here is the role of the buyer has changed,

whether they like it or not. If a buyer cannot adapt to the new environment, they very well may be causing more harm than good to the business!

Let's dive deep into the world of today's buyers and see how they need to function, day to day, in the current landscape to be successful.

IT'S MORE THAN BUYING

First, and possibly most important, the title "Buyer" needs to be retired — tossed away in the dustbin of yesterday and left to the history books.

"Buyer" elicits the sense the person is only responsible for the acquisition of inventory. This may be true in very large organizations, but for 99% of the people reading this, if the buyer's responsibility ends when the product hits the loading dock, you're quite likely sitting on punishing levels of excess, old, hard-to-sell and/or dated inventory that eats up your

**Make sure
the inventory
manager
has the tools
to properly
measure,
monitor and
act regarding
inventory levels
and purchasing
decisions.**

valuable cash reserves.

Inventory is quite likely the largest single expense a store regularly must deal with, yet often gets the least amount of

attention when it comes to how well it's performing.

So, how do we change this for the better? Here are four ways to elevate the traditional role of "Buyer" in your organization.

1. CHANGE THE TITLE

Let's start with the title. Instead of using "Buyer," use the title "Inventory Manager." This simple change can fundamentally alter how anyone who holds the role understands his or her responsibilities — and how they extend far beyond just buying inventory.

2. GET A QUALITY POS SYSTEM

Make sure the inventory manager has the tools to properly measure, monitor and act regarding inventory levels and purchasing decisions.

The tools critical to excelling in this role would include: a POS system able to report on inventory levels, performance and history; a personal understanding of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which identify inventory success; a reliable channel of communication with the sales team to inform them of inbound, sale, clearance; and other critical facets of inventory management.

Another tool of tremendous help would be to subscribe to an inventory database service such as RetailBI from GearFire. Business-intelligence data can give the inventory manager a better understanding of the retail landscape from data.

Alexis Tunell, Gearfire chief strategy officer weighs in: "Being able to get market intelligence about market-accurate pricing trends, sales volumes — as well as seasonal trends — puts an inventory manager in a far better position to negotiate a deal best for the store."

Data is everything! Any way an inventory manager can get a clearer picture of the current market space

If the buyer's responsibility ends when the product hits the loading dock, you're quite likely sitting on punishing levels of excess, old, hard-to-sell and/or dated inventory that eats up your cash reserves.

and how it will impact the store will enable them to make far more accurate purchases (and selling strategies), and to know when to clearance out inventory on the downtrend before the market totally collapses.

3. KNOW THE PROFIT MARGINS

A successful inventory manager needs to fundamentally understand the profitability needs of the products the store sells. An inventory manager needs the visibility to price products so, at the end of the day, all the efforts and expenses incurred with running the store are more than paid for from the profits of goods sold.

It may feel good to a store to have the "lowest prices in town" on an in-demand item — and even sell a lot of them in the process — only to find out later they weren't even covering their labor costs at the margins they set.

4. UNDERSTANDING A PRODUCT'S PROFIT POTENTIAL

All too many stores will consider putting products on sale once they've owned them for a year. Ultimately, for the vast majority of products, if a store has owned it for a year they'll be losing money on the sale of the item — even if they sell it at the full asking price.

Therefore, it's the inventory manager's job to understand the profit potential of every item in the store, know the timeframe it remains profitable and take actions to turn said item back into cash. This skill set takes a high level of sophistication and understanding of the costs incurred by owning and selling inventory over time.

IT'S TIME TO EVOLVE!

So yes, the role of the "Inventory Manager" today is far more complex than a simple "Buyer." To effectively post healthy profits at the end of the year, every store (if they haven't already) needs to evolve their buyer into an inventory manager to squeeze out maximum profits. It takes a great deal of market data and intelligence to make the best possible decisions around inventory purchases.

If an inventory manager can embrace the changing demands of the role, while using the tools available to them today, the chances of them leading their operation to a profitable outcome in any market conditions are vastly improved.

For most operations, the day of the "Buyer" is over and has evolved into the "Inventory Manager." The time is now to lean into this role and see the benefits! **SI**



Image: Walker's

Eyewear + Hearing Protection Sales Trends

BY SHANNON FARLOW

Firearm sales remain strong despite falling behind the record pace set in 2020 and 2021. This year is on track to be the third- or fourth-strongest in history for the shooting sports industry. How is the robust firearms market affecting the sales of shooting accessories, specifically eyewear and hearing

protection products? Has inflation hurt eye/ear protection sales? Which products and brands are moving best for retailers? What merchandising and sales strategies are the most effective for these products? Which new hearing protection technologies are the most popular these days with shooters?

To get answers to these questions and more, *Shooting Industry* spoke with Jared Millhouse,

general manager and lead instructor at Redstone Firearms in Burbank, Calif.; Mark Abramson, president of Los Ranchos Gun Shop in Albuquerque, N.M.; Jeff Monroe, president and CEO of 22three, Inc. in Lebanon, Ohio; and Larry Hyatt, owner and president of Hyatt Guns in Charlotte, N.C. Here are the insights and personal experiences they shared.

SI: How do sales of eye/ear protection today compare to earlier in the demand surge?

Abramson: We have seen a large number of new entrants in the marketplace, which has

created demand for a slower approach to the sale. We work to be sure the guest knows how to operate their firearm safely. Many times, eye/ear protection is a tertiary concern, and we have to bring up the subject. We believe sight and hearing are value-added propositions to the new shooter.

Millhouse: The sales for both eye/ear protection have been steady since 2019. The increase of gun sales and the need for shooting instruction have kept the demand up. We've seen a bit of a dip in recent months due the same dip in handgun sales.

Hyatt: While sales in every aspect of the market have slowed down, eye/ear protection is still in relatively high demand.

Monroe: For us, the sale of eye/ear protection is directly correlated to overall sales. As the demand surged for firearms, eye/ear protection followed. Now firearm and ammo sales have stabilized, we find the sale of eye/ear protection supplies has also normalized.

SI: What's driving this current sales trend? Has inflation impacted your eye/ear protection sales?

Monroe: Inflation appears to be impacting the amount of ammo people are willing to shoot. That has a relationship with range use and, in turn, the need for eye/ear protection.

Millhouse: I don't believe there's a "current sales trend." People are starting to take their own protection and the protection of their loved ones into their own hands. Based on this, even inflation hasn't

caused people to shy away from purchasing firearms, so ear protection sales have been steady.

Abramson: There is a lot more manufacturer marketing of ear protection, especially in-ear electronic solutions. Much of the higher-end sales seem to have gone online. Our sales include disposable earplugs and entry-level, old-school and electronic muffs. For guests looking for a more customized option, we refer them to a local vendor who does a great job with custom in-ear protection.

Hyatt: The best driver of sales of eye/ear protection is the safety for the customers. Losing your hearing is never a good thing and eye protection is another vital item when it comes to the shooting sports.

SI: What strategies have been effective in selling eye/ear protection to firearms buyers?

Hyatt: The most efficient way to sell electronic ear protection is to let the customer experience them.

Even if it's in the middle of your store, they'll be able to hear the amplification of voices and commands. They really do sell themselves if you give them an opportunity.

Monroe: The eye/ear protection products with the highest sales velocity are price-sensitive models purchased because they're needed to shoot in the range. Customers looking to purchase higher price-point options are likely to research items before making a decision. This research generally includes online reviews, as well as talking with sales team members.

Millhouse: When selling eye/ear protection in the store, there really is no need for a "strategy." The items sell themselves. Customers purchase firearms, and they want to learn how to use those firearms effectively and safely. We offer different levels of training. Most of our customers sign up for basic firearms training. They're the demographic who have absolutely no gear whatsoever and are first in line to buy any eye/ear protection we recommend.

Abramson: Typically, as we get to that point in the sale, it's hard not to make it sound like an afterthought. We believe in these safeguards, and try to emphasize these are absolute must-haves for range time.

SI: Eye/ear protection merchandising: What works? What doesn't?

Millhouse: Having the products on display is the best thing for sales. Merchandising is all about placement, so if clients

see it as they're checking out, they are more likely to ask questions about it or even purchase it. There's a specific flow we use in the store where they start on one side, transition to the middle and end up on the other side checking out and purchasing all of their necessary accessories. Placing the eye/ear protection at customers' eye level — but just out of arm's reach — seems to be the most effective way to foster conversation about it. This way it allows us to answer any questions they may have, offer our own personal opinions and be able to get the item for the customer to provide a true customer service feel.

Monroe: Merchandising is important for all our product categories and eye/ear protection must be presented in a way that shows the customers what's available and the differences between varying price points. We try to have a good, better, best option and help customers differentiate between these options.

Abramson: We've moved our display up front for our guests to see. However, we have not been as intentional as we should be in encouraging these safety devices.

Hyatt: Eye/ear protection is fairly easy to sell to new shooters. They're required to wear both at any range they go to, plus it's important to protect themselves. The upsell from passive to electronic ear protection is a bit harder, but easy with the correct salesperson's knowledge of the product.

"Having the products on display is the best thing for sales. Merchandising is all about placement, so if clients see it as they're checking out, they are more likely to ask questions about it or even purchase it."

*Jared Millhouse, GM & Lead Instructor
Redstone Firearms • Burbank, Calif.*



Jared Millhouse says even with rising inflation, customers are buying firearms and safety-related gear.

SI: Is there an eye/ear manufacturer with a good point-of-sale or range rental program?

Abramson: Not to my knowledge.

Hyatt: We've not experienced a range rental program with ear protection due to potential health and safety concerns. There are a few companies, SureFire and Safariland come to mind, with passive in-ear protection that make good displays we can place on our counters for easy add-on sales.

Millhouse: We've had most of our success with the Walker's Razor. Walker's stands behind their product, is cost-effective to the customers and gives a decent amount of options for the novice shooter all the way up to and including experienced shooters and hunters.

SI: With all of the first-time buyers joining our industry,

do they have different preferences compared to the industry's "typical" customer (older male and who lives in a rural area)?

Hyatt: We've seen a pretty vast increase in the amount of electronic ear protection we sell. I'm sure part of it is due to the advances in technology in the past few years. At our outdoor shooting complex, it's fairly easy to sell electronic ear protection to new shooters after they shoot for their first time using passive ear protection.

Millhouse: Today's first-time buyers tend to purchase things based on cost. They're mostly not concerned about quality or reputation to the industry. They're concerned about getting something they were recommended by a friend or family member or a familiar name they've heard in a movie. As they get more comfortable with this industry, their preferences start to

"We do better when we help customers find products that fit their individual needs."

Jeff Monroe, President & CEO
22three Inc. • Lebanon, Ohio

change. They take their time to research and to ask more questions about how different items operate, the reliability as well as company warranties. The "typical" customer from the past is expanding to include customers from urban areas, major cities, different ethnic groups and different genders. YouTube has expanded everyone's ability to see and hear firsthand reviews on products. Both the new and the old customers are starting to see the same thing and changing their preconceived views into something new.

Abramson: In-ear protection is growing rapidly, especially in the electronic area. We predict these will take off long-term. However, for entry-level shooters, their focus is on the gun and being armed. We encourage our guests to come back so we can show them how to clean their gun and discuss the next steps,

which certainly includes improved hearing protection.

Monroe: The industry is wise to understand customers come to us with varied backgrounds, different reasons for wanting firearms and different needs when it comes to eye/ear protection. We often hear about first-time buyers. We do better when we help customers find products that fit their individual needs.

SI: How frequently do customers transition from passive ear protection to electronic ear protection? Is it a tough sell?

Hyatt: We see the jump to electronic ear protection a lot, mostly after someone goes to the range and uses passive ear protection. Or during our sale, our employee makes use of a demo electronic pair that allows the customer to use the product and see what the hype is all about. It's often not a

tough sell after someone is able to experience both.

Abramson: The entry-level electronic muffs have come down in price. To gain the benefit of electronics in the \$30–\$50 range was unheard of a few years ago. However, there is competition in this area now. This offers a shooter a real opportunity to be able to talk with their range buddy or hear range commands and still enjoy the benefit of reducing the decibel level.

Millhouse: In this segment of 2022, ear protection is big. Most of our customers would rather have electronic ear protection. A lot of the older customers are concerned about how loud their guns are. No one seems to have a problem with paying more to save their hearing. There really is no selling involved when it comes to electronic ear protection. Customers want what is going to reduce the amount of harmful sound.

Monroe: A shooter's interest in better equipment increases

as they go to the range more frequently. Although some customers want to start with a better product, we find a lot of our customers will graduate to electronic ear protection as they become more interested in the shooting sports.

SI: What new technologies or products have stood out to you in this segment in 2022? Do you see any trends building momentum into 2023?

Abramson: We've been busy looking at other areas of our business, but the key is getting new gun owners to the range. We are concerned the "fix" for pandemic concerns was buying the gun, and we need to refocus on training — and more training.

Hyatt: I see the continuing uptick in sales for electronic ear protection as we go into the future. As more new shooters come into the market, the desire for better hearing protection will increase.

Monroe: It's exciting to see

smaller electronic hearing protection that integrates with cell phones. We have come to expect our phones will seamlessly connect to our cars and other Bluetooth devices. Likewise, our customers are looking for hearing protection able to do the same thing.

Millhouse: My favorite product for this year has been the Walker's Razor 2.0. This product has changed the way I think about ear protection. The ability to use this for more than just protecting the ears is setting a new standard. It's Bluetooth compatible for use with your phone and the ability to control the volume as needed is a huge benefit. They seem to be more comfortable than your standard over-the-ear design. Walker's has continued to set a standard in this part of the industry and I can't wait to see new advancements as technology evolves.

SI: Any recommendations for dealers who want to expand their eye/ear protection inventory? Anything new they should try?

Abramson: Don't forget disposable ear plugs. Many new shooters will develop a flinch and other bad habits as they anticipate recoil and a loud report. Easing this by encouraging them to wear disposable plugs and ear muffs will minimize the effect as they get used to the "bang" as part of the firing process.

Hyatt: We have had great success with electronic ear protection; the main two brands being Walker's Razors and Peltors. The ability to have a demo unit of some kind has made a world

of difference to our sales!

Millhouse: My recommendation is to try multiple products. Tell the customer exactly how it works for you. Be honest with them and don't hold back. The more they look at us as real people and not "gun people," the more they'll see the benefit to listening to our guidance. Considerations for purchasing eye/ear protection are the same as when purchasing a firearm. It's going to be different for each person. Some people like your traditional foam earplugs, others like the most modern over-the-ear design; still others love the super sleek and small earbuds. As far as retail is concerned, you should not be afraid to experiment with other types of ear protection, other than the ones we're used to. The more options we have for our customers, the better the outcome will be.

Monroe: It's critically important to meet customers where they are. We must understand their specific needs. We have to have sufficient diversity of products to meet their needs, and we have to present the products in a way they can appreciate the differences. Finally, as with all customer service, having friendly, knowledgeable staff your customers can trust is key. **SI**

Larry Hyatt models some of the store's top sellers. At the high end, Walker's Razor electronic muffs are popular, while Radians' reusable corded earplugs are excellent for entry-level shooters.



Editor's Note: Additional excerpts from this story — including an update on how this market has been impacted by the supply chain — are available at shootingindustry.com.



BY BRYAN HENDRICKS

VARMINT/ PREDATOR HUNTING IS A MOVING TARGET



**varmint/
predator
hunting**

**is a niche market, but it
can translate to lucrative
commerce outside of
traditional big-game
hunting seasons.**

In the eastern U.S., varmint hunters target groundhogs and crows.

In the south, coyotes and feral pigs are the headliners.

Prairie dog hunting is very popular in the West, but coyote hunting is emergent among younger hunters.

Regardless of location, varmint hunters typically use small-bore rifles chambered for .22-caliber centerfire cartridges. Because they're inveterate tinkerers, varmint hunters are also very fond of accessories. Popular add-ons include daytime and nighttime optics, portable benches, rests, aftermarket barrels, aftermarket stocks and suppressors.

Most varmint hunters also reload their own ammunition, which means additional sales of bullets, powder and primers when available.

ADDRESSING A "UNIQUE MARKET"

Bill Pool, owner of Arkansas Gun Traders in Benton, Ark., is an ardent prairie dog hunter and an accomplished target shooter. He says there are distinct sects within the varmint hunting community that can best be described as "unique

markets." Prairie dog hunters prefer bolt-action rifles with heavy barrels. They snipe from portable benches from the suburbs of sprawling prairie dog towns.

Coyote hunters are mobile. They desire light, compact rifles.

"A lot of those guys buy sporters because they walk a lot. They're just going to get a few shots," Pool noted. "They buy a varmint caliber, but they don't buy a true varmint gun. High-volume shooters buy heavy-barrel guns."

Serving either sphere of the varmint hunting market is challenging, according to Pool, because varmint hunters are educated and savvy. They're not generally impulse buyers. They know what they want.

"When I get a phone call, it's, 'Do you have such and such?'" Pool said. "If you don't have such and such, they look somewhere else."

TOP REQUESTED BOLT-ACTION RIFLES

The most requested bolt-action guns are Savage, Tikka and CZ, according to Pool. Savage and Remington dominated the varmint hunting market, but Remington is currently out of the game. Pool noted Tikka adroitly filled Remington's void, and customers now ask for it. Tikka used to be a tough sell.

"Savage is probably the biggest varmint rifle we have," Pool observed. "They make a variety of guns, and they shoot well. If you want a reasonably priced gun and it shoots well out of the box, it's hard to beat a Savage."

One reason Savage is so popular, Pool shared, is because it's so easy to modify.

"Savage has got to be one of the most popular guns because it's such a do-it-yourself market," Pool said. "It's a lot like the Ruger 10/22 market and the AR-15 market. You can buy a barrel and put it on, and it takes minimal equipment and minimal know-how to do it. The possibility was there for a long time, but people didn't really start swapping barrels around until Savage got to be a popular brand."

MODERN SPORTING RIFLES SHINE

Because of its versatility, the AR-15 platform has also become very popular in varmint hunting. Simply by swapping upper units, you can convert a .223 into a .30-caliber or larger to handle virtually any hunting or shooting application.

Driving its popularity are generations of former and active military personnel who used tactical military rifles during nearly 30 years of continuous warfare in the Middle East and Asia.

Jim Eddie, an associate at The Shootin' Den in Colorado Springs, Colo., noted the trend mirrors earlier preferences of former soldiers gravitating to the firearms they used in previous conflicts.

"Of the newer shooters — the younger folks — it's kind of like what we saw post-World War I with bolt-action rifles," Eddie said. "After World War II, the semi-auto became popular. The modern sporting rifle is popular among the new wave of combat veterans, the 40-and-under category. It's what they carried, and it's what they're used to. It's not a bad platform for varmint hunting, either. A lot of the guys who came back had sniping backgrounds in the Middle East. It's what they like."

Notice Eddie's subtle shift in terminology: He didn't call it an "AR-style" rifle or a "tactical-style" rifle, its usual references in media. It



MOST OF THE PEOPLE PREFER THE AR PLATFORMS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE BECAUSE THERE'S SO MUCH AVAILABLE FOR IT, AND THEY CAN BUILD IT ANY WAY THEY WANT."

Jim Eddie
Associate
The Shootin' Den
Colorado Springs, Colo.



Rock River Arms Fred Eichler Series Light Predator2L

is becoming known as the "modern sporting rifle" (MSR). It's a crucial step to mainstream acceptance for a platform that experiences considerable resistance in popular culture.

"Most of the people prefer the AR platforms more than anything else because there's so much available for it, and they can build it any way they want," Eddie shared. "You can change your upper to a 24" barrel or a 20" barrel. The flexibility of the modern sporting rifle platform, the modularity of it, makes it really easy. With just one lower, you can have 20 rifles without having to buy 20 rifles."

In much of Colorado, largely because of federal regulations that discourage hunting prairie dogs on public land, many hunters have shifted their focus to coyotes. Due to its light weight and portability, the MSR is ideal for hunting coyotes.

"What people are looking for in the hunting world is a lightweight rifle," Eddie observed. "As far as varmint hunting goes, I don't get a ton of people coming in specifically looking for a dedicated varmint rifle."

GOING HOG WILD

In Texas, where feral pigs run rampant, hog hunting is immensely popular, as is coyote hunting. Dillon Baker, general manager of Texan Guns and Gear in Stephenville, Texas, said his outlet specializes in hunting guns. He also sells a lot of varmint calls and assorted shooting accessories. The Bog Pod shooting tripod, for example, is very popular.

Where legal, many hog hunters prefer to hunt at night when hogs are most active. Their kits include a thermal optic and a red light. The red light illuminates a pig's eyes for target acquisition, Baker shared. The thermal optic aids in target identification.

"We sell a lot of thermals to hog hunters," he noted. "Everybody who comes in wants one if they can afford it. That market has grown tremendously. As thermal prices have come down for quality optics, we've been able get more of them into hunters' hands."

According to Baker, hunters can buy a good AGM thermal unit for about \$1,000.



I ORDER MORE GUNS WITH THREADED BARRELS THAN WITHOUT BECAUSE THE CHANCES OF PUTTING ON A SUPPRESSOR ARE GROWING EVERY DAY."

Dillon Baker
General Manager
Texan Guns and Gear
Stephenville, Texas

"A lot of people can get in on that price point and get a little above a decent-quality thermal optic," he elaborated. He also sells a lot of Trijicon, Fusion and Pulsar Thermal Imaging.

Coyote hunters rely heavily on electronic callers, according to Baker.

"Fox Pro is big around here," he said. "I sell a crap-ton of them."

DEMAND FOR SUPPRESSED RIFLES UP

Curiously, suppressors are becoming common in the varmint hunting market, Baker noted. The federal e-form has contributed to their popularity by simplifying the approval process.

"Instead of having to wait 375 days, it's down to 150 days," he said. "It has really changed the game. Now we have people buying a thermal and a suppressor, and they're getting it fairly quick."

People aren't buying suppressors for stealth, Baker said. They buy them to protect their hearing.

"It's not for the pigs; it's for them," he stated. "When you're shooting high-powered rifles, you don't have to worry about blowing

your buddy's eardrums out. He's suppressed too."

Because of the demand for suppressed rifles, many gun manufacturers offer threaded barrels.

"I order more guns with threaded barrels than without because the chances of putting on a suppressor are growing every day," Baker observed. "I don't see a reason to not buy a threaded barrel, and honestly, I don't know why gun manufacturers are offering guns without threaded barrels."

Even though the platforms have changed, varmint hunters remain very specific about the cartridges they like. There are a lot of niche cartridges for special applications, but most varmint hunters still use .223 Remington, 5.56x45 or .22-250 Remington. It's not likely to change soon because those three are so well proven afield. The .204 Ruger is also very popular.

SIMILAR TRENDS IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Prairie dog hunting is still king in South Dakota, but hunters there are also embracing coyote hunting, said Matt Harnes, manager of Teton

River Traders Gun Shop in Ft. Pierre, S.D. As in Texas and elsewhere, coyote hunting tournaments are creating a lot of interest.

Interest in prairie dog hunting ebbs and flows with prairie dog populations, which fluctuate with disease. When prairie dogs are plentiful, people hunt them enthusiastically, Harnes noted. When populations are down, interest wanes.

Even in prairie dog hunting, the modern sporting rifle is becoming increasingly popular, Harnes suggested, because the rifles are becoming more accurate. His AR-style rifles shoot 1/2 to 3/4 MOA. The downside to using a semi-auto with high-capacity magazines is you burn through ammunition a lot faster than with a bolt action.

"A lot of guys figured out they have self-control problems and burn up their ammo pretty quick," Harnes said. "We see a lot of guys go back to bolt rifles, but not because of accuracy."

There's also a lot of demand for suppressors among Harnes's clientele, again for the social aspect.

"I see a lot more suppressors so people can talk while they're shooting," he said. "Prairie dog hunting is still very much a social sport. It's the main mindset I see. I don't see a lot of guys go out by themselves. Very few."

COMPONENTS STILL AN ISSUE

A big detriment to varmint hunting is the scarcity of reloading components. All high-volume shooters reload their own ammo, but it's difficult and expensive with primers, bullets and powder being so scarce. However, this problem is beyond the retail level. You can't stock what you can't get.

Nevertheless, varmint hunting has a dedicated following throughout the U.S., and retailers who serve this market generate loyalty, goodwill and recognition.

And, of course, sales. **SI**



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

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STOREFRONTS vs.

HOME-BASED vs.

RANGES

BY DOUG VANDERWOUDE

Who Brings The Most Value To The Industry?

Like many of you, I've been following the "Home-Based FFLs: Why Are We Pariahs?" articles and would like to add my two cents to this discussion. I've been a retailer, joined a buying group for more advantages, worked for a distributor that focused on brick-and-mortar and am now with a manufacturer. (The manufacturer I work for is in indoor range equipment, so I really don't have a dog in the retail fight anymore.)

Not only do I believe storefront retailers deserve first crack at new items, hard-to-get inventory and, most importantly, better pricing than non-storefronts, I feel ranges with retail should get even more benefits. Why? Because they provide a huge asset to both the consumer and our industry.

You may not think it's fair, but if you're not providing a benefit why would you deserve a reward in the way of better treatment than others who provide a service that benefits the consumer? If you're only moving product and not providing any service/benefit, you're probably hurting the industry.

ANYONE CAN SELL CARS

Here's a parallel example from the automotive industry. Say I'm a car guy, enjoy keeping up on the

newest models, giving friends advice on what I think is the best one for them and like Fords. Does this mean I should be allowed to sell new Fords out of my garage, at swap meets or on a website just because I received a license to sell cars? Should I be able to buy them at the same price as my local dealer?

Of course not; I'm not providing a service to Ford or the consumer. I could say my local dealer doesn't give good pricing or advice to my friends like I would. I could point out he only stocks bestsellers and neglects to stock ROUSH Mustangs. With these points, I doubt my call to Ford Motor Company to sell me cars at the same price as my local Ford dealer would be returned.

Why should firearms be any different? Look at the success Benelli has had with their product line —

you don't see non-storefronts offering them. What you do see is stores that have earned the right to be a Benelli dealer with generally good displays and tend to have staff who know the product.

THE STOREFRONT EXPERIENCE

Imagine a storefront with a gleaming display — this type of presentation helps the image of the brand, dramatically increases the chance for the consumer to have a good experience, learn about the brand (like Benelli), benefits of each model and select the one best suited for the purpose the consumer had in mind. There's also a good chance the consumer came in thinking they wanted one model, and after talking with a knowledgeable salesperson they were steered to a model, gauge or barrel length better suited to their goal. This interaction adds value to the brand and the consumer and dramatically increases the chances this consumer enjoys our sport and will continue being a consumer.

Providing this type of experience costs a lot of money on behalf of the storefront retailer. Cost of building a good retail area, extra cost to make the building look good (both inside and

outside), having staff on hand to answer questions, cost to have them trained, capital spent to have inventory in stock for consumers to handle and on and on.

If Benelli sold to everyone, what incentive would the retailer have to invest in the extras that make a good experience for the consumer?

THE NON-STOREFRONT EXPERIENCE

Let's look at how this would work if consumers could buy Benelli from a



If you're only moving product and not providing any service/benefit, you're probably hurting the industry.

non-storefront. Our consumer, instead of turning into a well-lit parking lot in a retail area, has to go to someone's garage — certainly not a high-end brand image. Think they'll have the same high-end displays? Not a chance. Without having access to multiple models, gauges or barrel lengths to swing, odds are pretty good the consumer will end up with the wrong one.

Think also about all the extras to help this consumer enjoy the sport — cleaning kits, choke tubes, cases, etc. If the non-storefront doesn't have them, they could order it for our consumer — but where's the value there? The consumer can do the same from their couch. So, our basement dealer really didn't provide a value to the consumer, Benelli or the industry. Again, why should this basement dealer be rewarded by getting special pricing, shipments or other considerations?

THE MANUFACTURER EXPERIENCE

Now let's look at it from the manufacturer's side. If Benelli sold to non-storefronts, at the beginning they would probably sell a lot more guns, as both brick-and-mortar retailers too small to be on the program and non-storefronts would rush to get in on selling Benelli. Not too long after the non-storefronts with low overhead (no expensive rent payments, far less labor cost, no expensive point of sale/inventory management system and of course very little inventory carry cost) will drop the price, racing to the bottom.

For a while, Benelli is the beneficiary as they sell even more guns. Next, legitimate dealers start losing sales to the lower-price offered by non-storefronts. The storefronts quickly figure out it's not worth the effort to stock a lot of Benellis, spend labor dollars training the staff on the finer points of Benelli and advertise they're a Master Dealer.

Finally, the storefront dealers stop putting in extra inventory, extra training of staff and Benellis just fall into the rest of the stock, no special display as the incentive to promote Benelli would go away, eventually



A brightly lit store and gleaming displays account for only part of the customer experience. The rubber meets the road at the counter: where the dealer or sales associate ensures a first-class experience for customers. (Image: Logan Peralta | LP Creative Media)

they may just stop stocking them altogether. Years after these storefront dealers stop offering a premium retail experience, consumers lose the image of the brand being high end. Finally, after the brand is footballed around at low prices, no retailers focus on them.

Now the industry suffers a little because the brand isn't advertised (any good advertising of our sport is helpful to our health), consumers — especially new ones — don't have a good buying experience. They didn't get the extra assistance, selection to choose from and may even have purchased the wrong model for their needs, so now the gun ends up unused in the closet and we lose a lifelong consumer.

WHY RANGES DESERVE EVEN MORE

Take it a step further: If the retailer has a range where the consumer can test drive before they buy, we have a grand slam. Now, it's very likely they buy the right model for their needs. It's the best-case scenario for the industry and the consumer.

This is why I campaign ranges deserve even better treatment — not only over non-storefront, but even more than retail-only stores. Range operators have made a huge investment into our sport, offer shooting as entertainment, training opportunities and more to grow the industry. Someone who buys a firearm and actually uses it is exponentially more likely to stay involved.

Keith Collier, co-owner of Cypress Creek Indoor Range in Florence, Ala., sees this every day: Consumers come into his range asking about one model and after test-firing, leave with another model better suited to their needs. With the benefits Keith's business provides every day to consumers and manufactures, tell me how he doesn't deserve first chance at allocated items and better pricing from someone without this huge investment in a range and inventory.

To this end, my favorite promotion involved ranges being treated better than both non-storefronts and standalone retailers. I worked for a now-bankrupt distributor and ran a range-only promotion for the launch of the GLOCK Gen5. GLOCK selected



Not only do storefront dealers invest a considerable amount of money merchandising inventory, they also invest money/resources/time on experienced staff members — like these bowtechs at John's Sports Center in Pittsburg, Kan.



Storefront retailers deserve first crack at new items, hard-to-get inventory and, most importantly, better pricing than non-storefronts. Ranges with retail should get even more benefits. Why? Because they provide a huge asset to both the consumer and our industry.

certain ranges to launch the gun by opening at midnight or first thing the next morning.

Each range received 20 GLOCK Gen5s to sell days before any retailers (even big-box stores) received them, and they also got some range guns for consumers to test. This allowed ranges to sell the guns without discounting and gave consumers a great experience by allowing them to

“try before you buy” since they knew the range had some in stock. A win for the ranges, huge win for consumers and win for GLOCK.

WE NEED A FOOTPRINT

No, I'm not living in a dream world; I realize there's a lot that can and does go wrong in the above examples. Too often, brick-and-mortar retailers are their own worst enemy and will race to the bottom on pricing, have untrained staff, not offer a great retail experience, not have the product in stock, etc.

However, if we — as an industry — don't protect them somehow, will our industry be as strong? If all we become is a giant webpage with products at cheap pricing, no stores left to provide outstanding retail experience and no ranges where consumers can test, train and entertain, what are we then? **SI**

We know this topic has generated a lot of reactions this year — from both storefronts and home-based dealers — and we welcome additional feedback anytime: editor@shootingindustry.com. Stay tuned for another feature in next month's issue.

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GUNS Magazine's 2023 Special Edition issue of **OLD WEST: HISTORY, GUNS & GEAR** highlights the life and talents of frontier legends Dr. George Goodfellow, MD and detective extraordinaire Delos "Yankee" Bligh. It examines classics such as the 1851 Colt Navy and Savage 1907, as well as modern takes of the S&W No. 3 American, .50 Smith Carbine, Winchester 1873 and 1873 SAA by Cimarron, Pietta and Taylor's & Co. Frank Jardim reviews Uberti's replica 1860 Henry Rifle — the "original" assault rifle, and in "The Final Shot Of The American Civil War," Will Dabbs, MD recounts his chance encounter with a 157-year-old Yankee cannon ball and the liberation of its black powder.



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wildgameinnovations.com

Housed in a rugged, 3D-textured ABS thermoplastic polymer housing, Wildgame Innovations' **SPARK 2.0 COMBO** offers everything needed to record big bucks and log their movements. The 18-megapixel image sensor captures still images in a 16:9 format for crisp, clear viewing on a mobile device or laptop. With a trigger speed under one second and a 70' detection range, it ensures reliable recording in the most challenging locations. Time, date and moon phase stamps let users know what's happening and when for hunt planning. Available in Standard and LightsOut (invisible IR LEDs for capturing flash images) versions, the Spark 2.0 Combo also features a cable-lock-ready latch (cable not included) for maximum security. Eight AA batteries and an adjustable tree strap with alligator-style clips are included.



BIG HORN ARMORY

(307) 586-3700
bighornarmory.com

Big Horn Armory introduces its first tactical lever-action rifle, the **BHA MODEL 89 BLACK THUNDER**, chambered in .500 S&W Magnum. With its short 16.25" barrel, it is a quick-handling, rapid-shooting carbine ideal for hunting, home defense or survival situations. Its stainless steel construction, heat-treatment and black-nitride finish make it nearly impervious to corrosion. The Model 89BT comes with handcrafted, quality Skinner rear aperture adjustable sights, a factory-installed Scout Scope Mount rail and M-LOK rail. The Model 89 Thunder has a six-round capacity, weighs 7 lbs., 6 oz. and is 36" long overall.



STURM, RUGER & CO.

(336) 949-5200
ruger.com

The Ruger **LC CARBINE** chambered in 5.7x28mm has a full 16.25" barrel, features a reversible side-folding stock adjustable for length of pull and is compatible with Picatinny rail-mounted accessory stocks. The compact nature of the carbine owes to its bolt-over-barrel design and feeding through the grip. The stock and Rapid Deploy adjustable sights can be folded for storage. The LC Carbine utilizes the same magazines and controls as the Ruger-5.7 pistol and the Secure Action fire-control mechanism. The fluted, nitride-coated alloy steel barrel is durable and lightweight and allows for the attachment of standard muzzle accessories.



SAFARILAND

(800) 347-1200
safariland.com

From Safariland, **SCHEMA** is an optics-ready minimalist holster designed for subcompact firearms. The skeletonized outline of the holster frame has a smaller footprint than traditional IWB offerings to optimize concealability. It offers superior functionality with a reinforced mouth, allowing for seamless firearm holstering. The firearm-specific design creates an exacting fit, further secured by Schema's passive trigger-guard retention. Schema is currently available for the SIG SAUER P365 and P365XL, Taurus G2C and G3C, GLOCK 43 and GLOCK 43X and Springfield Armory Hellcat.

SIGHTRON

(919) 562-3000
sightron.com

The **2ND GENERATION S1** series of 1" riflescopes from Sightron use a 1" lightweight aircraft aluminum tube that is O-ring sealed, air purged, then filled with nitrogen gas for waterproof and fog-proof performance. Compared to the 1st generation, 2nd generation riflescopes feature improved optical design, light transmission, eye relief, have more generous sight pictures and are lighter in weight. Five models are currently available: S1 1.75-5x32 G2 with one reticle option; S1 3-9x40 G2 with three reticle options; S1 3.5-10x50 G2 with one reticle option; S1 4-12x40 G2 with two reticle options; and S1 4-12x40 AO G2 (adjustable objective front focus) with two reticle options.



TAYLOR'S & COMPANY

(540) 722-2017
taylorsfirearms.com

Taylor's & Company launched the **TC9 SERIES** of 9mm pistols which includes four reproduction models of the 1873 Cattleman revolver. The TC9 9mm pistol is offered in two styles: a large Army-size, walnut checkered grip with blued steel finish and a black-checkered standard-size grip with case-hardened frame (pictured). The checkered grip gives increased performance and faster sight acquisition. The TC9 utilizes a side-loading gate and an ejector rod housed within the loading lever assembly for easy loading, unloading and reloading. The revolver clone has a steel frame with a rear frame notch and fixed front blade sight. Both versions are available in 4.74" and 5.5" barrel lengths.



DUCK CAMP

(737) 270-7665
duckcamp.com

The **CONTACT SOFTSHELL JACKET** from Duck Camp provides rugged protection without sacrificing flexibility. The jacket boasts a 90% polyester shell with DWR/bonded fleece back and 10% spandex construction. The DWR treated face fabric provides water and wind resistance. Its high chest hand-warmer pockets have silent magnetic closures. The jacket has adjustable cuffs, waist/hem, a 3-point hood adjustment and a harness pass-through. It's available in men's sizes S-3XL in Wetland, Woodland (pictured), Midland and Pine Oak camo patterns.

ANTLER KING

(888) 268-5371
antlerking.com

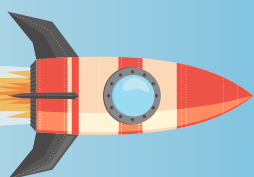
Antler King's **GREAT 8** fall annual food plot blend is formulated with eight delectable plant varieties that mature at different times for a continuous food source throughout the season. Winter peas and buckwheat will bring in deer during the early season, while radishes, turnips and forage rape will attract them during the rut. Winter oats and cereal rye mature from archery season through gun season and beyond. The robust blend provides protein and energy to keep deer herds healthy during harsh winter conditions and facilitate antler growth in the early spring. Great 8 is available in 8- or 40-lb. bags.



FRANCHI

(800) 264-4962
franchiusa.com

Franchi expands the Momentum Varmint Elite rifle with two new caliber offerings: **6.5 CREEDMOOR** and **.308 WIN.** The rifles have a 24", heavy-contour fluted barrel; three-lug bolt engagement system with a 60-degree throw and spiral-fluted profile and hardened chrome finish. Its RELIA Trigger is an adjustable single-stage trigger users can customize to break cleanly between 2 and 4 lbs. The rifle comes with a medium-size removable comb that can be switched for higher or lower comb options (sold separately). Integrated, recessed QD sling and bipod mounting points maintain a clean profile for prone shots or when using a bipod. Momentum Varmint Elite rifles weigh 9 lbs., and are 46.75" long.



**MANUFACTURERS, LAUNCH YOUR
2023 NEW PRODUCTS WITH SHOOTING INDUSTRY!**

nps23@fmghq.com



BUSHNELL

(800) 423-3537
bushnell.com

Bushnell adds two micro red dot sights to its RX Series: the **RXC-200** and **RXU-200**. The micro red dots are compatible with compact semi-autos such as the GLOCK 43, S&W Shield, Springfield Armory Hellcat and SIG P365 with the SHIELD Reflex Mini Sight Compact mounting footprint and pattern. The 6 MOA dot automatically adjusts intensity for the environment and consumes less energy when holstered or stored. Overall height of the RXC-200 is 23.5mm and the RXU-200 stands at 19.5mm. Both sights exceed Mil-Std-810 impact and vibration requirements and are IPX7-rated and moisture sealed to withstand being submerged in 1 meter of water for 30 minutes.



CHRISTENSEN ARMS

(435) 633-4667
christensenarms.com

The **MHR** (Modern Hunting Rifle) from Christensen Arms is built on an aluminum mini chassis with V-block bedding and its FFT (Flash Forged Technology) stock, forearm and grips can be customized to fit any user or shooting position. Features include: custom machined receiver, skeletonized bolt handle, FFT carbon fiber bolt knob, custom TriggerTech trigger, FFT carbon fiber forearm, interchangeable grip modules, adjustable FFT carbon fiber cheek riser, carbon fiber wrapped barrel, stainless steel side baffle brake (removable) and a 5/8x24 threaded muzzle. Finish options include Black Anodized, Desert Brown and Tungsten Cerakote. The MHR is offered in three chamberings — 6.5 Creedmoor (1:8" twist rate), 6.5 PRC (1:8" twist rate) or .308 Win. (1:10" twist rate). Each version has 22" barrel an OAL of 43.5".

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gr. Total Distribution Outside the United States (Sum of 15gr(1) and 15gr(2))	0	0
gs. Total Distribution Outside		

ADVERTISER INDEX

ADVERTISER	PAGE	ADVERTISER	PAGE
Avient	3	Kinsey's Inc.	51
B&T Industries	21	MGE Wholesale Inc.	2
Camfour	19	North American Bancard	9
Davidson's Inc.	29	NSSF	52
Electronic Transfer Inc.	13	PrOlix	17
HSM Ammunition	5	Ruger	7
IWI US	1	Walk The Talk America	39
Joseph Chiarello & Co. Inc.	15	Zanders Sporting Goods	11



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NEW PRODUCTS



SPRINGFIELD ARMORY INC.

(800) 680-6866
springfield-armory.com

Springfield Armory has launched the **PRODIGY AOS 9mm** pistol, the first offering in Springfield's 1911 DS double-stack line of pistols. The Prodigy, available in both 5" and 4.25" variants, offer capacities of 17+1 in a flush-fit magazine and 20+1 in an extended one, both included with purchase. An optional 26-round magazine is also available. It's optics-ready, shipping with a cover plate with rear sight, as well as one optics-mounting plate designed for the HEX Dragonfly — along with a variety of today's most popular red dot optics.

BROWNELLS

(800) 741-0015
brownells.com

Brownells unveiled new Cerakote color variations of its popular **BRN-180 UPPERS**. The BRN-180 16" in .223 Wylde is available in Olive Drab Green (ODG). The 10.5" BRN-180S in the same chambering is available in both ODG and gray. The 10" .300 Blackout BRN-180S will soon be available in both ODG and gray. The 16" .223 Wylde BRN-180 Sport — with charge handle optimized for modern optics and mounts and no ejection port cover — will be available in Flat Dark Earth.



ONTARIO KNIFE COMPANY

(828) 524-6842
ontarioknife.com

Ontario Knife Company (OKC) has added two models designed for hunters in its popular RAT-3 series of fixed-blade knives: the **RAT-3 SKINNER** (pictured) and **RAT-3 CAPER**. The OKC RAT-3 Skinner features a large belly with great curvature — adept for skinning game or providing support during small chopping tasks. Crafted from quality 1075 phosphate-coated high-carbon steel, the blade measures 3.75" and an OAL of 7.65". The OKC RAT-3 Caper features a 3", 1075 phosphate-coated high-carbon steel blade with an OAL of 8.25". The Caper has additional space on the neck for more detail control along with a large finger choil for optimal comfort. Both knives incorporate the RAT-3 Micarta handle and come equipped with a full-blade leather sheath.



HAVA EXPANDS TO PNW WITH RANGE EVENT

Honored American Veterans Afield (HAVA) hosted its inaugural Pacific Northwest (PNW) Range Day at the Tacoma Sportsmen's Club (Tacoma, Wash.) in early September. The event spanned three days with a different group of guests each day. In all, 75 veterans each enjoyed a day of shooting, camaraderie and prizes.

HAVA worked with Tacoma Sportsmen's Club President Mac Taylor to offer disabled veterans and wounded active-duty military guests a multi-faceted shooting experience. The event's stations included trap shooting, primitive archery, sling shot, long-range rifle, red dot pistol and a Genesis tactical shotgun stage hosted by VerTac Training.

"Coming to a new range and a new area can be challenging" said Chris Fleming, HAVA event co-lead and firearms instructor. "Our staff comprised of industry professionals and expert instructors never disappoint. They're truly there for the selfless task of serving those who have served and are still serving us on the front lines. We'll be back to visit the folks in the Pacific Northwest."



A participant sends rounds downrange during HAVA's inaugural Pacific Northwest Range Day, held in early September at the Tacoma Sportsmen's Club.

One guest added, "I didn't know how much I needed this experience. The HAVA staff enabled me to reconnect and do what I truly enjoy, shooting awesome

firearms and connecting with my fellow veterans. I can't wait until next year!"

[/ honoredveterans.org](http://honoredveterans.org)

USACTL, U.S. COUNCIL FOR ATHLETES' HEALTH TEAM UP

The USA Clay Target League (USACTL) has teamed up with the U.S. Council for Athletes' Health (USCAH), an arrangement that will provide athletes, parents and coaches access to health, safety and wellness education resources to support and optimize student athlete healthcare.

"The League's priorities have always been safety, fun, marksmanship — in that order," said USACTL President John Nelson. "We're happy to work with the USCAH to provide educational programs that support the health and well-being of League athletes, parents and coaches across the county. They're highly regarded and successful working with schools and national athletic associations

such as ours."

The U.S. Council for Athletes' Health believes creating a culture that prioritizes athlete health and safety is the responsibility of everyone involved in athletics, not just healthcare personnel. Athletes, coaches, parents, administrators and officials should all have at least a baseline understanding of health, safety and welfare issues common in youth sports.

USCAH has created an online learning platform called "Athletics Healthspace" that houses a growing library of courses customized for youth sports and can be completed via the website or mobile app.

"We're excited to partner with the USA Clay Target League to collaborate and enhance the health, safety and well-being of their participants. We look forward to working together to



prioritize health and safety," said James R. Borchers, M.D. M.P.H., co-founder and president of USCAH. [/ usaclaytarget.com](http://usaclaytarget.com)

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

INDUSTRY LINK



BY JADE MOLDAE

3 VALUES THAT HAVE AGED WELL

Nearly 10 years ago, we published a note in *Letters To The Editor* under the title “What’s Your Grade?” from Lonnie Craigton, a dealer in the Kansas City area. Unlike milk, bananas or early predictions the iPhone was just an oversized iPod and was never going to “catch on,” this particular letter aged pretty well.

It began: “Dealers need to get over all the fuss about internet competition. It’s not going to change, and those who sell through the internet will actually get more of many parts of our business. That’s just the way it is, but there are many things those who sell through the internet can’t provide, one being our service.”

The “service” argument has existed for as long as the independent dealer vs. big-box retailer debate, but Craigton pointed out there is often inconsistency in how it’s delivered.

“There’s plenty of talk about service and how great we dealers are at it, but if we’re really honest, some of our ‘service’ really isn’t service at all,” he noted. “Step back and look at your store as if you’d just walked into it for the first time. Your display may look really nice, but a lot of products you have in those displays people can buy [online].”

He continued, “What about your service? How are you doing in this part of your business that can make the difference if customers come back to you?”

Craigton went on to suggest dealers should take a step back and objectively “grade” themselves on the quality of their service, staff and more.

“If we took the time to give ourselves grades on how good our service is, would we get an ‘A’ or an ‘F’?” he asked. “When I did this type of grading, I found I was a bit embarrassed about my grade. I have to admit: One of my sales guys I had previously bragged about stopped selling and began talking down to customers. He doesn’t work for me anymore.”

Craigton’s letter closed with the following sentiment: “I can’t do anything about the internet, but I can improve my business.”

Three values stood out to me after revisiting this insightful letter.

1. PUT YOURSELF IN CUSTOMERS’ SHOES

Taking this approach to our own businesses, have we taken a step back to evaluate our performance? Are we serving our customers with products/services/education they *actually* want, or what we think they *should* want?

Gleaning customer preferences can be done quite easily these days through a simple “How did we do?” email sent to the guest after a purchase or class experience. The interactive nature of social media gives your store another avenue to connect with customers. Find out what works (and perhaps, more importantly, what could be improved) and get team members on the same page.

2. ALWAYS DELIVER ON CUSTOMER SERVICE, ON PRICE WHEN POSSIBLE

Craigton hit the nail on the head: How is your customer service making a difference if customers come back in to your store? As the industry adjusts to the post-pandemic “new normal” — with a softening in the market and customers increasingly shopping on price — where does that leave customer service?

Well, if your store doesn’t value providing top-class service, customers *will* go elsewhere — even if your prices are so low they result in lost money on every transaction. Find the products that yield the best margins and push them throughout this year-end buying season.

“

As the industry adjusts to the post-pandemic ‘new normal’ where does that leave customer service?

3. CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

There’s a lot of good sense in Craigton’s closing statement: “I can’t do anything about the internet, but I can improve my business.” There are so many things outside of our control or sphere of influence — especially over the past two-plus years — but maintaining a hold on what you *can* control is certainly worthwhile.

Can’t get that highly sought-after new product? Hold an in-store seminar, promoting inventory you do have on-hand to drive traffic. Make your store a go-to, trusted and friendly resource for the community and it will be able to stay competitive in today’s marketplace.

Continued on p. 49

So, after evaluating your store’s operations — what’s your grade? Send any feedback to editor@shootingindustry.com. Who knows? It may age well enough to encourage dealers in the mid 2030s.


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