

SHOOTING INDUSTRY

THE INDUSTRY'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE — EST. 1955

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Part 2

2024

NEW BUSINESS
YEAR EDITIONSouthwick's Annual
*New Year Prediction*6 BURNING
QUESTIONS FOR 2024Where Is
Retail Going?

AI CONSIDERATIONS

Plus: More 2024
New Products!

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Safe & Secure — The "Hold
My Guns" Program p. 48

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New Year, Same Ambition: Growth!

Welcome to the 2024 New Business Year. This issue is filled with a collection of columns and features with one goal: to help your business grow and be profitable in the new year.

An array of topics will be examined over the next 60 pages — with stories ranging from new year sales predictions, how to boost your online presence, the best way to approach AI and more.

Have a comment after reading this issue? Contact the *SI* team anytime: editor@shootingindustry.com.

NEW YEAR PREDICTIONS

In its annual industry outlook article, the Southwick Associates team assesses current market conditions and predicts how they'll persist throughout 2024 (pp. 24–27).

“We expect consumer interest and demand for firearms to remain strong, meaning retailers should expect sales to stabilize between the 2016–2017 levels, with localized exceptions as usual,” say Nancy Bacon and Rob Southwick.

In “6 Burning Questions For 2023,” Tim Barker hears from three experienced retailers, who provide their insights on what to expect this year (pp. 30–33). Larry Hyatt, owner of Hyatt Guns in Charlotte, N.C., assumes there won't be too much change from 2023 — barring unexpected social unrest, war or something similar.

“It looks to me like next year is going to be a continuation. There's going to be lower demand. And stores better have a good selection because nobody wants to drive to a physical store if they don't have products,” he advised.

MENTORSHIP KEY TO LONGEVITY

In order to thrive, our industry needs mentors ready to build up the next generation of sport shooters and hunters. This issue contains three



JANUARY 2024

stories that shine a spotlight on the value of mentorship today.

Industry News features the story of an all-women antelope hunt in Wyoming, showcasing how six women (four of whom were first-time big-game hunters) spent time together and out in the field — which resulted in strong connections (p. 10).

In Jay Pinsky's article, “Mentorship In The Outdoor Space” (p. 40), he highlights the ultimate goal of mentorship: “Regardless of how you choose to mentor, or be mentored, remember the final goal isn't a trophy harvest but a trophy life. Make it your goal and at the end of the day, you'll have more success in and out of the deer stand — and so will the people you care about.”

Finally, Michelle Scheuermann attended a SIG Rose Retreat last October and found well-thought-out events like this create lifetime bonds between women and the brands they support. In “The Costs Of Putting On A Gun Retreat? Priceless.” (p. 44), she shares her experiences and how other attendees view SIG SAUER as a result.

MORE 2024 NEW PRODUCTS!

Part two of the 2024 New Product Showcase appears on pages 52–64. A wide range of products from 50 brands is featured here. For those of you attending SHOT Show or other early-year buying events, be sure to take note of these products and stop by to see them in person. **SI**

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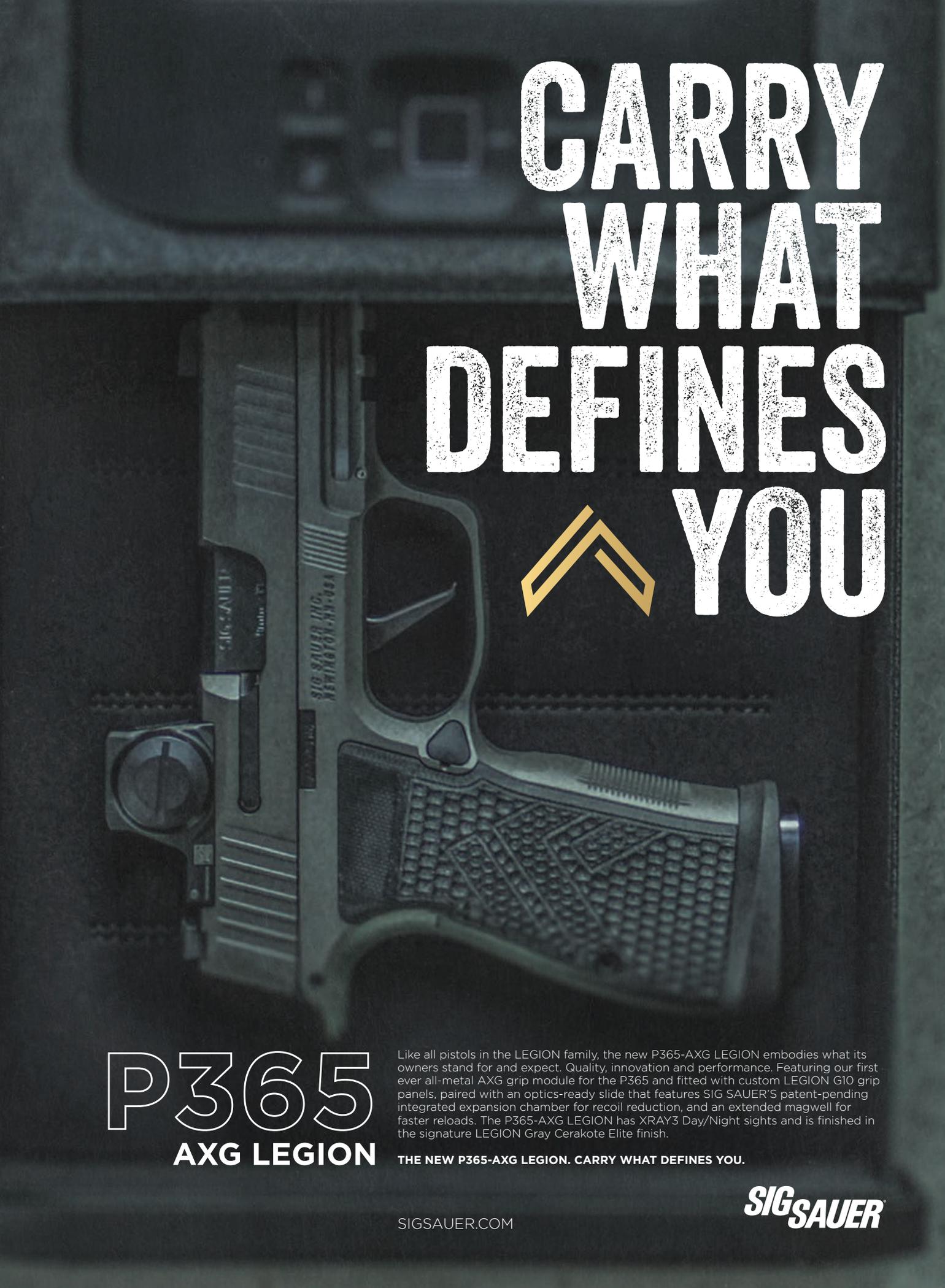
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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WIN-WIN: HOME-BASED FFL VS. LGS

Regarding the debate “home-based FFLs vs. retailers,” I’m not even sure why there is a debate! I would encourage people who don’t support the existence of home-based FFLs to reflect back on their high school civics class.

The United States is a constitutional republic and our capitalistic, merit-based system has lifted more people out of poverty and spurred more success in every sector than any other system on earth. Our freedoms, including the freedom to operate a privately owned small business, are the envy of the world.

Most well-known businesses, including Brownells, MidwayUSA and Cabela’s started as small businesses back in the day when starting a gun business was relatively simple.

Sometimes a customer does not want to deal with a large retail gun dealer. They may feel pressured to buy and feel they are being rushed into making a decision, or are not getting the time and attention they would like or are getting hit with an arrogant, boorish salesman.

The focus of my home-based FFL is collector arms, which I sell on my website or through GunBroker.com. I’m able to give my customers the time and

personal attention they need. I focus on helping my customers find the right gun for their purpose, experience and hand size. I buy used guns and perform transfers from time to time. I also advise elderly clients and will buy entire estate collections at fair prices. As a small business, I can offer a sort of concierge service the big retailers can’t offer.

I have a symbiotic relationship with my local gun store (LGS), MKR Tactical in Gig Harbor, Wash. They sell modern new guns and don’t usually want to deal with used guns. So, they refer the sellers of used guns to me and I often refer buyers of the new guns to them.

Additionally, when my LGS is too busy to do transfers, I can take up some of that excess demand, alleviating the bottleneck — which allows the continued flow of commerce. It’s a win-win relationship. We help each other succeed.

If other dealers (both home-based and LGSs) would adopt a similar mutually supportive posture, both sides would benefit! Isn’t supporting the local gun community what it’s all about? After all, it’s our passion; that is why we got into this business in the first place, right? **BT**

— **Barry Bookman • Owner/Founder**
Paramount Firearms
Vaughn, Wash.

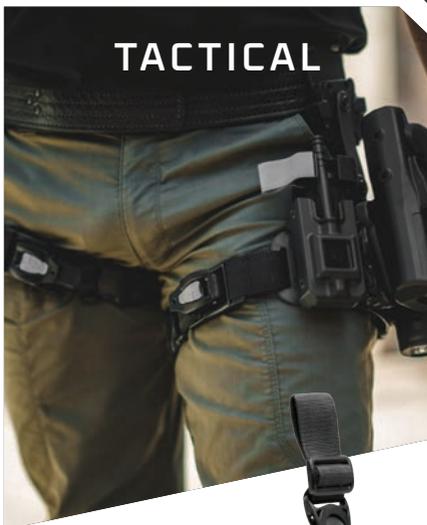
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◀ Vista Outdoor's Laura Burgess with an antelope she tagged at 162 yards using her Savage .270.

VISTA OUTDOOR WOMEN EXPERIENCE 2023 WYOMING WOMEN'S ANTELOPE HUNT

Last October, six women representing Vista Outdoor set out from the Ranch at Ucross near Wyoming's Big Horn Mountain to join the two-day Wyoming Women's Antelope Hunt.

The Wyoming Women's Foundation has provided this big game hunt for women for 10 years. This year proved more difficult than usual as 3" of rain soaked the area the day before the hunt started. The women had a strenuous weekend that sometimes included

pushing pickups down muddy roads.

"It was physically challenging, but we proved we have a bunch of tough ladies on our team," said Karie Roers, director of tax at Vista Outdoor, and hunter-organizer of the event.

Of the six women participating, four had never hunted big game. They received pre-event coaching from Jon Zinnel, senior manager of conservation and youth shooting sports for Vista Outdoor Sporting Products. Zinnel

oriented the group and answered their questions. The novices also had multiple range days to get sighted in and ready for the adventure.

Joining Roers on the hunt were Melissa Bang (director of digital and e-commerce at Sporting Products), Michele Zachman (executive assistant at Sporting Products), Mallori Nelson (law enforcement/OEM/government and international customer service manager, Lewiston, Idaho), Laura Burgess (senior director of human resources at Hunt/Shoot, Tactical and Golf) and Brit Bisbee (factory operations manager, Lewiston, Idaho).

Continued on p. 12



It was physically challenging, but we proved we have a bunch of tough ladies on our team."

Karie Roers, Director of Tax
Vista Outdoor

MDT SPORTING GOODS ACQUIRES WARHORSE DEVELOPMENTS

MDT Sporting Goods, a leader in the precision rifle chassis manufacturing industry, announced its acquisition of Warhorse Developments, known for precision and quality in its shooting bags.

An MDT news release said of the acquisition, "This strategic move brings together Warhorse's legacy of crafting durable, meticulously designed gear

with MDT's commitment to accessibility and innovation in the shooting sports industry."

MDT is now offering a line of Warhorse-designed shooting bags constructed of sturdy 500D Cordura and featuring names inspired by legendary horses.

The MDT Traveller shooting bag retails for \$49.95 and the MDT Grand Old Canister shooting bag is offered at \$59.95. The MDT Peanut shooting bag retails for \$89.95.

With facilities in Chilliwack, B.C., Canada and Everson, Wash., MDT got its start with the iconic TAC21 rifle chassis,



MDT Shooting Bags

co-developed with precision shooters. The company continues to innovate new products by collaborating with shooters worldwide.

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

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Continued from p. 10

Bang tagged her antelope at 163 yards with a 6.5 Creedmoor.

“I was nervous about killing a large animal. It was one of the hardest things I have ever done. Once you are out in the field, however, you encounter a newfound appreciation for why people enjoy hunting. We don’t get to experience beauty like that every day, and it was an honor to be able to do so. You realize the ‘why’ behind it is about conserving populations, feeding our families and offering gratitude for the beauty that exists,” said Bang.

Nelson and her hunting partner walked roughly 20 miles between the two

12-hour days. She came away empty-handed and disappointed, albeit still grateful for the experience.

“For the first time in a very long time, I had to be present in the moment. I couldn’t think of grocery lists, dance rehearsals, feedings, laundry, work, reports, etc. I had to be very present in the moment, only concentrating on my next step, the wind in my face and being on the lookout for black and tan spots. This was my first hunting experience, and even though I did not harvest, I killed that 200-yard gong at sight-in!” said Nelson.

Federal Ammunition and Remington are two of the sponsors of the Wyoming

Women’s Antelope Hunt, which provides women hunters with mentoring and camaraderie in addition to the thrill of the hunt. The event emphasizes hunter safety, hunting and land ethics and conservation and the proper management of wild natural resources.

Each year, Vista Outdoor sends a group of women to the hunt, to learn from the experience and, if desired, to continue their hunting journey or convince others to enjoy hunting.

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

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

REMINGTON, OSCF, ARKANSAS GAME & FISH SALUTE HATS, CONSERVATION

Remington Ammunition, the Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation (OSCF) and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) are shining a spotlight on America’s 60 million+ active HATS (Hunters, Anglers, Trappers and Shooters) with a new video series, “Connecting with Conservation.”

The series highlights the significant contributions made by the firearms and ammunition industry to land, fish and wildlife conservation efforts in the U.S., and recognizes HATS as primary drivers of those efforts.

“It is past time HATS understand, and get credit for, funding conservation in America,” said OSCF Executive Director Jim Curcuruto. “By contributing \$3.6 billion each year, there is no doubt HATS are leading the way supporting conservation, and we appreciate Remington Ammunition and Arkansas Game and Fish for helping to give credit where credit is due.”

The OSCF developed the video series in collaboration with industry manufacturers and state agencies. The latest video showcases the Remington Ammunition factory in Lonoke, Ark., and gives viewers an inside look at ammunition manufacturing.

The video also shows how industry companies like Remington helped pave



the way for the 1937 Pittman-Robertson Act (now known as the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act). The law codified the means to fund wildlife conservation agencies through the imposition of an excise tax on the sale of firearms and ammunition.

“AGFC wants to thank partners like Remington and other firearm and ammunition manufacturers for their continued support of conservation through Pittman-Robertson funds,” said AGFC Director Austin Booth. “These funds directly support new ranges, recreational shooting sports programs and hunter education, and represent a significant source of our funds for public land access in Arkansas. It also contributes to habitat management that benefits wild places and wild things in the ‘Natural State.’”

To date, more than \$7 billion has been collected from manufacturers and made available to states for their conservation efforts.

The “Connecting with Conservation” video was produced with the support of the Murray Road Agency. Funding for the project was provided by the Multistate Conservation Grant Program (F23AP003940), a program supported with funds from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, and jointly managed by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

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

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

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

HORNADY ANNOUNCES ISO 9001 CERTIFICATION

Hornady Manufacturing Company announced it has achieved ISO 9001:2015 certification for Quality Management Systems (QMS) from the Systems Certification Body (SCB) for its ammunition production facility.

ISO 9001 is the internationally recognized standard for QMS. It is the most widely used QMS standard in the world, with over 1.1 million certificates issued to organizations in 178 countries. In simple terms, ISO 9001 certification provides the basis for effective processes and effective people to deliver an effective product or service time after time.

“One of the keys to success here at Hornady is a commitment to strong quality control. By implementing



ISO quality principles, any potential customers can quickly identify that we have put in the effort to ensure we are producing the finest-quality products,” said Matt Spencer, Hornady compliance director.

Founded in 1949, Hornady Manufacturing is a world leader in U.S.-manufactured bullets, ammunition, reloading tools, accessories and security product design and manufacturing. The company is family-owned and headquartered in Grand Island, Neb.

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

OLD GLORY BANK INTRODUCES LIBERTY SMALL BUSINESS CHECKING

Old Glory Bank is furthering its commitment to small business with the introduction of Liberty Small Business Checking, offering accounts that require no opening deposit.

“Old Glory Bank openly supports those industries that many big banks run from, including small businesses that manufacture, distribute and sell firearms and related accessories,” said John Kingma, Old Glory Bank’s chief product officer and chief of business banking.

Liberty Small Business Checking is the third checking account from Old Glory Bank to serve small business through its mobile banking service.

“A small business can now benefit from our great mobile banking for no monthly fee if they maintain an average



OLD GLORY BANK

daily balance of just \$500. Otherwise, the monthly fee is only \$5,” said Carol Ritchie, business banking relationship manager for Old Glory Bank.

Old Glory unveiled the Liberty checking account to coincide with Small Business Saturday, an annual event during Thanksgiving weekend encouraging consumers to shop in person or online at small businesses.

Old Glory Bank is an FDIC-insured chartered bank that offers mobile banking solutions for consumers and businesses. The bank guarantees never to cancel a lawful business for the beliefs it supports.

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FEDERAL RENEWS LONGTIME PHEASANTS FOREVER, QUAIL FOREVER SPONSORSHIP

Federal Ammunition announced the renewal of its national sponsorship of Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever earlier this year, including its title as official ammunition sponsor of The Habitat Organization. The renewal continues a partnership that has existed since the mid-1980s between Federal and North America's foremost upland habitat conservation group.

"It's evident the work that Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever volunteers have done is paying off," said Jon Zinnel, Federal's senior manager of conservation.

"Federal is proud of the relationship we have and the ability to see the outcomes of such strong conservation efforts that the organizations put forth across the country."

Along with the sponsorship, Federal Ammunition has an on-box royalty program that donates a portion of proceeds from the popular Prairie Storm and Upland High Velocity shotshell ammunition lines to habitat conservation projects nationwide. Federal will also be the presenting sponsor at the upcoming National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic, to be held March 1–3 at the Denny Sandford Premier Center in Sioux Falls, S.D.

"The Federal brand speaks directly to the mission work accomplished by our chapters, members and partners



Federal Premium Prairie Storm

on a daily basis," said Chris Kalis, VP of corporate partnerships for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever. "As a company that covets conservation of wild things and wild places, we're proud to call them part of the Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever family."

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

ORION WHOLESALE LAUNCHES REVAMPED DEALER WEBSITE

Orion Wholesale announced its updated dealer website, now with improved navigation and more-detailed product specifications to better serve the needs of its customers.

The website's improved functionality and enhanced content allow customers to view and research all products more

easily, including up-to-date rebates and sales programs. The API interface allows dealers to feed live inventory on their websites, and includes multiple options for purchasing. The site is also optimized for search engines.

Orion partnered with Coreware to offer 24/7 access to its entire product catalog.

Founded in 2012, Orion Wholesale has grown from a regional to a nationwide distributor, carrying over 120 product



lines in the shooting sports industry. With a commitment to customer service, competitive pricing and timely deliveries, Orion continues to look to the future.

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

PERAZZI ACQUIRED BY CZECHOSLOVAK GROUP

Dec. 14, 2023, Czech CSG Group announced the purchase of the majority stake (80%) in the Italian, family-owned company, Armi Perazzi S.p.A., manufacturer of high-quality shotguns for sport shooters and elite hunters.

Producing approximately 1,500 units per year, Perazzi counts numerous Olympic medalists and successful competitive shooters as owners of its products. One of them is the Czech Olympic gold medal winner in trap from the 2008 Beijing Olympics, David Kostealecky. CSG also operates two small-caliber ammunition factories in the U.S., and signed an agreement with Vista Outdoor to acquire its Sporting Products

division in Oct. 2023.

Perazzi's founder was Daniele Perazzi, an Italian gunsmith who fulfilled his dream when he founded the Armi Perazzi company in 1957. Currently, the company is led by the founder's descendants, Mauro and Roberta Perazzi. With CSG's 80% stake, the Perazzi siblings share the remaining 20% equally. The business will continue to be run by the Perazzi family and the current management team.

The purchase of Perazzi is CSG's second major acquisition in Italy. Last year, the company acquired a majority stake in Fiocchi Munizioni, the manufacturer of small-caliber ammunition, which operates production facilities in Italy, the U.K. and the U.S. Perazzi serves the American market through its subsidiary, Perazzi USA Inc., in Azusa, Calif. Perazzi USA is the sole importer and distributor for the U.S.



market.

"Armi Perazzi is a prestigious brand in the field of firearms for sport shooters and elite hunters. At the same time, it is a stable and prosperous company that the Perazzi family excellently manages. The motivation for this acquisition is not only financial but also to strengthen CSG's international prestige and reputation as a global and innovative industrial group expanding in Europe and the USA," said Michal Strnad, owner of CSG.

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

RUGER CELEBRATES 75TH ANNIVERSARY

In honor of its 75th anniversary, Sturm, Ruger & Co. Inc. has released commemorative firearms from each of its firearm production facilities: a Mark IV Standard model, a pair of 10/22 Sporter models and an LCP MAX.

“Ruger has come a long way in 75 years,” said CEO Chris Killoy. “From humble beginnings in the Red Barn in Connecticut to three powerhouse manufacturing operations in Arizona, New Hampshire and North Carolina — and with more support facilities throughout the U.S. — Ruger has made its name by providing top-quality firearms that represent a great value to the shooting public. On behalf of our almost 2,000 dedicated associates, I thank our customers for making our first 75 years such a success!”

From the Prescott, Ariz., facility, Ruger’s 75th anniversary is commemorated with a Standard model of the iconic Mark Series pistol. Featuring a fully adjustable rear sight, an undercut Patridge front sight, and a heavy, tapered barrel, this attractive pistol balances well in the hand and retains the classic styling of the iconic Standard pistol that launched the company in 1949. Additional details include a 75th anniversary logo engraving on both the receiver and the bolt, and handsome, fully checkered grip panels.

The Newport, N.H., facility offers two 75th anniversary models of the 10/22 rimfire carbine. Each model features a stainless steel barrel, silver-finished receiver, polished bolt engraved with the 75th anniversary logo, a match-sanded butt pad and front and rear sling swivels. Model 31275 has a traditionally stained and checkered hardwood stock, while Model 41275 has an unstained hardwood stock adorned with dark checkering.



Mayodan, N.C., the location of Ruger’s newest manufacturing facility, offers a unique LCP MAX to celebrate the Company’s 75th anniversary. The LCP MAX is a double-stack, 10-round version of the enormously successful LCP. The anniversary model of the LCP MAX features a stainless steel slide adorned with an engraved 75th anniversary logo and a silver-anodized aluminum trigger.

These four Ruger 75th anniversary models are shipping now, and will be available throughout 2024. [SI](#)

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




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DEALER PRICE	\$418.95

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NEWSMAKERS



M. CARLSON

Buck Knives Welcomes Sales VP

Marty Carlson is now serving as the VP of sales for Buck Knives.

He will oversee the company's internal and external sales organization and independent rep groups, as well as look to accelerate growth and further strengthen the brand.

Lane Tobiassen, president of Buck Knives, shared, "I have no doubt that Marty will propel our sales organization and company to new heights."

Carlson has held senior-level sales positions during his 20-year career. Most recently, he was the senior director of sales — camping and watercraft for Johnson Outdoors.



J. KRIEG

Zanders Sporting Goods Hires Sales Manager

Jeff Krieg has joined Zanders Sporting Goods as sales manager.

"[Krieg] has the passion and drive to be successful, and with his prior knowledge we are confident he will do a great job," said Zanders President and COO Danny Siegler.

For the past 20 years, Krieg has held several management and supervisory positions in the retail industry.

He earned a degree in business and risk management from Illinois Wesleyan University.



B. GOALDER

Berger Names Sales & Compliance Manager

Berger named Bob Goalder its export sales and compliance manager where

he will head international sales efforts in addition to meeting all federal, state and local government requirements.

Adam Braverman, Capstone Precision Group VP of sales and marketing, said, "Bob holds the qualities we sought out in filling this position — an outgoing personality and eagerness to help grow Berger's international presence."

Goalder has been warehouse manager at Capstone Precision Group, manufacturer and distributor of Berger bullets and ammunition, for the past five years and brings a background of international logistics, compliance and customer service support to his new role.



F. MORALES

5.11 Tactical Announces Exec. Changes

5.11 Tactical announced the planned transition in the senior leadership of the company. Co-founder and former CEO Francisco J. Morales will serve

as the executive chair of the board of directors, and board member Troy R. Brown assumes the role of CEO.

In these new roles, Brown will assume day-to-day leadership of the company while Morales will continue to work with the leadership team.

Brown joined the board in 2019 and has provided instrumental advice and guidance assisting the brand in its rapid nationwide expansion.



R. BOTHA

QuietKat Taps Sales Manager

QuietKat announced the appointment of Ross Botha as its new sales manager

for military, law enforcement and official government agencies (OGA).

Jake Roach, president and

co-founder of QuietKat, stated, "[Botha's] unique blend of experience, knowledge and customer-focused approach align perfectly with our mission to provide innovative solutions to those who serve."

Botha's career in the global defense community spans several decades. He is a former military officer and co-founder of a Southern African defense-training provider.



P. LEMKE

Legacy Sports Appoints COO

Legacy Sports International announced the appointment of Paul Lemke as

its new COO. Lemke's extensive background in the shooting sports industry, along with his record of driving growth and operational transformation, positions him as an ideal fit to spearhead Legacy's continued expansion and innovation efforts.

Rick Hanke, CEO of Legacy Sports International, shared, "[Lemke's] strategic vision and leadership capabilities are well aligned with our core values and goals."



D. HESS

Hold My Guns Elects Board President

Hold My Guns (HMG), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to

supporting gun owners through firearm storage, appointed David L. Hess as the new board president.

Hess is a co-owner of HMG's Arizona Storage Partner, MAD Partners Inc., and works as a director for KPMG LLP. He has been involved with HMG for several months as an FFL Storage Partner and serving as a board member with a focus on FFL engagement.



Custom & Collectible Firearms Announces Sales Director

Custom & Collectible Firearms announced Cameron Salvaggio was recently named the director of sales and marketing. He aims to expand the reach of the company by working with retailers to get firearms in the hands of enthusiasts and collectors alike.

A company press release stated: "Cameron is a great asset and will play a vital role in helping us develop relationships with key retailers across the country. His drive and ability to work with firearm dealers benefit the entire team and make him an ideal leader as we continue to grow our brand."

Salvaggio previously worked for the independent sales agency Owens Outdoor Sales.



Pnuma Outdoors And Heated Core Retains Sales Director

Pnuma Outdoors and Heated Core welcomed Mike Meiran to its leadership team as the director of sales, where he will be leveraging his extensive experience in sales, marketing and merchandise planning.

"Mike brings a unique perspective that will provide a new era of growth and innovation for both Pnuma and Heated Core. He's a great addition to our team, and we're excited for what's to come," said Phil Dalrymple, GM of Pnuma Outdoors and Heated Core.

Most recently, Meiran served in roles at Kinsey's Archery Products. He also worked for Gillz LLC and Marolina Outdoor, home to brands such as Huk and Nomad.



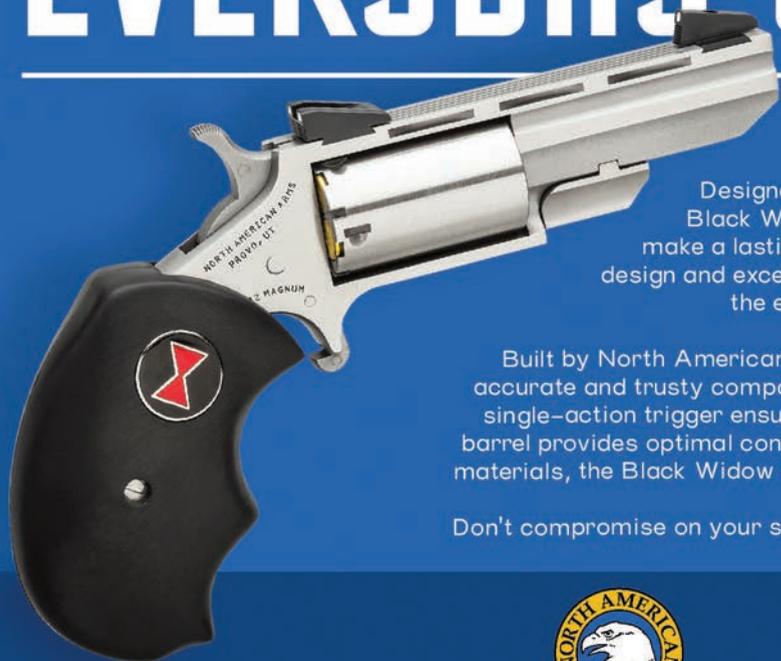
Hydra Weaponry Names Sales & Marketing VP

Hydra Weaponry announced the addition of Mark Eliason as its new VP of sales and marketing. He will focus on increasing brand awareness among distributors and dealers, as well as creating sales and marketing programs for the company's growing line of firearms.

Mack Gwinn III, president of Hydra Weaponry, stated, "[Eliason] has the experience and relationships already built within our industry to help give our brand access to critical sales channels."

Eliason has more than 30 years' experience in the industry. He began his career with Bushmaster and served as the VP of sales and marketing for Windham Weaponry. **SI**

YOUR NEW EVERYDAY CARRY



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Built by North American Arms in Utah, the Black Widow is an accurate and trusty companion for personal defense. Its precise single-action trigger ensures each shot counts, while the 2-inch barrel provides optimal concealment. Handcrafted from premium materials, the Black Widow exudes confidence and sophistication.

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BY MASSAD AYOUB

SELLING PREMIUM-PRICED DEFENSE GUNS

Let's recognize at the outset: except for boutique gun shops catering exclusively to the "carriage trade," premium-priced guns aren't the bread and butter of most retail firearms dealerships. However, the profits per sale are substantial and should not be ignored. And here's why.

PRESTIGE VALUE

For some customers, certainly, the prestige value is *the* selling point. I grew up in a family jewelry store. A corner of the showcase had some low-priced watches, but most were more expensive. We had a lot of doctors, lawyers and executives buying high-priced timepieces.

The fact was a Rolex didn't keep time better than a Seiko or even a Timex. The Patek Philippe wasn't bought to know what time it was, it was bought to show the world the owner had *arrived*, so to speak — and it reminded the owner of this reassuring fact whenever he or she wanted to know what time it was.

With prestige guns, there's something similar, particularly when the customer shoots in competition or just plinks with friends often — or simply likes to show off his collection. After all, a prestige handgun is carried concealed just like an ordinary GLOCK or SIG and is not an avatar of

"conspicuous consumption."

Much of the value of a high-priced defensive handgun is in the customer knowing he or she has paid the price to protect themselves and their family with the best possible equipment.

OBJECTIVE & SUBJECTIVE FACTORS

Let me tell you a short story. Back in the 1970s, I was the feature editor for a series of regional police professional journals. One of them was done for the association that represented the state troopers of Colorado. Back then, the typical police patrol car was a plain Jane Ford, Chevrolet or Plymouth — the traditional "low-priced cars" of the time.

Similarly, the duty .357 Magnum service revolver of a state trooper was likely to be a Smith & Wesson Combat Magnum or Highway Patrolman model, or a Colt Trooper. I noticed, however, the Colorado State Patrol ensconced their troopers in so-called "medium-priced" cars: Buick, Oldsmobile or equivalent. Likewise, their standard-issue service revolver was the premium-grade Colt Python.

The reasons, I was told, were comfort and confidence. As to the vehicles, the patrol car was the trooper's "office" for at least eight hours a day, and their commanders wisely wanted them to be as comfortable as possible for an all-weather climate.

As to the guns, high command knew the troopers patrolled solo and would likely be alone when they needed their sidearm to stay alive, and they wanted the troops to know they had been provided with the best equipment available for this purpose.

You don't see this line of thinking much in institutional environments, but you see it more with the individuals who come into your shop. Hold this thought: first, "The Best That Can Be Had," and second, comfort and performance factors.

EXAMPLES IN INDIVIDUAL SALES

For the customers who have the discretionary income to afford it, there is something reassuring in being able to say, "I bought the best there is to protect my family."



Much of the value of a high-priced defensive handgun is in the customer knowing he or she has paid the price to protect themselves and their family with the best possible equipment.

To return to the automobile analogy, one reason many people pay more for a Volvo or a Subaru than for an economy car is those brands advertise their crash-worthiness and the fact they're engineered to keep their precious cargo safe when bad things happen. There's some of this going on in the minds of your customers when they come to you to buy defensive firearms.

This brings us to "signature model" guns from boutique manufacturers. Ed Brown Custom developed the policy of sometimes doing a one-year production run of a 1911 pistol with

features specified by gun experts who had earned a reputation. When a customer bought the Jeff Cooper or Jim Wilson or other signature model, they knew it had been shaped by the experiences of an expert they trusted, and this gave them a little more confidence in what they were carrying. The same is true of a Ken Hackathorn Special from Wilson Combat or a Clint Smith-inspired Thunder Ranch Special from more than one custom maker.

When Ed Brown did the Massad Ayoob Signature Edition, I was gratified at how many purchasers I met — some of whom told me they bought the gun before they met me, and some of whom did so after training with me — because the round butt, Commander-size .45 had the attributes they wanted for personal protection.

But endorsements from subject matter experts are far from the main reason customers want these top-line guns.

What sells them is performance.

PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING ATTRIBUTES

The customer buying a defensive firearm has visualized themselves having to use it in a life-or-death situation. If the expensive gun gives them an edge they wouldn't have had otherwise, it's not just a selling point but a genuine potential life-saver.

You sell Smith & Wessons? You know the higher-priced Performance Center series is advertised to come with smoother triggers for better shooting at speed, and in some of the revolvers with recoil-reducing gas ports which can increase the rate of accurate rapid fire. This is just one example.

A couple of years ago, I acquired a Langdon Tactical Technologies custom Beretta 92G, complete with a Trijicon SRO optical sight. Now, I've accumulated 10 or a dozen Beretta 92 series pistols and they are all excellent defensive weapons, but when I compete with a Beretta it's usually with a full-size Langdon because it simply shoots better for me. When I carry a Beretta it's usually one of my two Wilson Combat 92 Compacts, because I'm a compact-size person.

They all shoot better for me than the same brand out of the standard factory box.

Why do "boutique" 1911 carry guns sell for \$3,000? Because in standard production you can get 1" to 1.5" groups or consistent reliability in adverse circumstances, but not both ... and in a Wilson Combat, Ed Brown, Nighthawk, etc. you *do* get both!



Endorsements from subject matter experts are far from the main reason customers want these top-line guns. What sells them is performance.

In the premium-priced AR-15 rifles, it's the same thing: the high-priced guns combine accuracy with certain reliability — thus creating confidence. And confidence intertwines with competence.

For the customer to pay more, he or she needs to understand the value that accompanies the price tag. If the gun lets the customer shoot better, it's another value-increasing element to overcome a higher price.

Tell the average customer, "For \$1,500 more I can sell you this one that will group an inch or two tighter." He'll probably answer, "That juice ain't worth the squeeze." But ... for your customer who is gunning for the next State Champion title, it could be worth every penny extra.

A closing sales tip: Remind the customer if he keeps a \$3,000 gun for 30 years it will still be worth a lot at the end of time, and it will have cost him about 30 cents a day to own it.

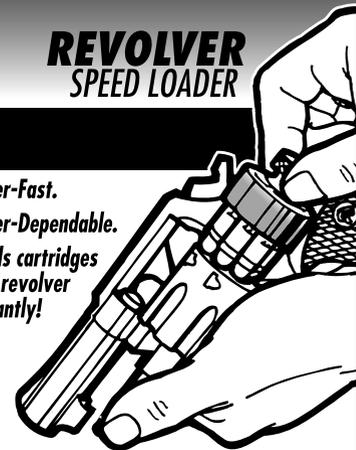
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BY NANCY KEATON

WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY CONNECT AT “THE MINGLE”

Have you ever attended an event and thought it was so good it was something you’d like to replicate and expand upon?

That’s how Shelley Hill, co-owner of The Complete Combatant, created “The Mingle.” Over the past eight years, she has turned it into a bigger, better event than the original.

WHAT IS “THE MINGLE?”

The Mingle is a two-day, invite-only event for women in the firearms industry to build relationships in support of businesses, network and collaborate to expand connections and explore personal growth in business, self-defense, 2A activism and more. Throughout the event, there are guest speakers and instructors, live-fire and presentation training blocks, door prizes and, of course, mingling.

The Mingle’s full name is The Mingle: Openness to Experience.

This concept is explained in The Mingle’s mission statement: “The personality trait that best reflects the lay concept of open-mindedness is called ‘openness to experience,’ or simply ‘openness.’ Open people tend to be intellectually curious, creative and imaginative. Being open-minded is generally considered a positive quality. It’s a necessary ability in order to think critically and rationally. If you are not open to other ideas and perspectives, it

is difficult to see all of the factors that contribute to problems or come up with effective solutions. The Mingle dedicates every event to all the ladies that come with an openness to experience.”

The concept for The Mingle was born at SHOT Show 2017, when Hill and her husband, Brian, were invited by Cheryl Todd (prominent 2A advocate and owner of AZFirearms in Avondale, Ariz.) to attend an all-ladies meetup, the Women’s Meet & Mingle.

“I thought at the time it was an awesome idea; we have nothing like that where I’m from in Georgia. On the plane after SHOT Show 2017, I told Brian about it and I said we need to have something like that in Georgia. So by the time we landed I had already put things in motion in my brain and in May of that same year we were doing it,” she recalled.

The first Mingle event was four hours long with 40 people and a guest speaker. The next year it was eight hours long with more people; then the next year she extended the event to two days so they could host more people and include shooting.

This May will be the eighth year of the event. It’s capped at 80 shooters and Hill says that’s as large as she wants it to be.

“I will not go any higher than that. We want it to be a small VIP event where we know everybody’s name, we

know their background, we know their goals and we are happy to network with them,” she shared.

Hill is enthusiastic about her ability to provide quality offerings.

“The feedback on the instructors is phenomenal. I only bring in good people who have the personality I want for this event. Instructors and speakers have included Brian Hill who is, of course, my husband. We’ve had Lee Weems, Claude Warner and Sarah Hauptman. In 2024 we’ll have Aqil Qadir, and Sarah Joy Albrecht, founder of Hold My Guns, will be discussing suicide awareness and providing Gatekeeper Certification — a very important topic for professional firearms instructors to understand.”

In addition to speakers, Howie Marbury and Shannon Pable will run the HK range that allows attendees to try out different HK models.

WHO ATTENDS THE MINGLE?

Attendance is not open to the public; it’s restricted to women in the firearms industry and is by invitation only. Attendees can be someone such as a club president, professional shooter, Second Amendment advocate, firearms instructor or other self-defense instructor.

“We prefer anybody who knows non-lethal, lethal and less-than-lethal self-defense as long as they’re certified and in the industry. We know not everybody is super proficient with their firearm, but this is what we focus on so it helps them in their journey,” Hill explained.

She continued, “So, you have to be safe and you have to have experience drawing from the holster, but that doesn’t mean you have to be a firearms instructor.”

WHAT DOES HILL ENJOY ABOUT THE EVENT?

Hill’s favorite part is the hugs.

“I just feel like people don’t hug each other enough. Even people who aren’t huggers will come up and hug me and say, ‘I wait for my once-a-year hug.’”

In addition, she shared, “During the event it’s just watching people and hearing them talk about something new they learned that they can’t wait to implement.”

After the event, she loves to see the networking.

“During the event they’re busy and they may bond and they may like each other, but they’re working. Then on

Sunday afternoon, you see things blossoming and then you get to watch it throughout the year in the various groups they are in. It's amazing to see the relationships being built because I decided to do something for two days, and watching these people that are now lifetime friends, it's amazing. I love that."

WHAT DO INSTRUCTORS & ATTENDEES THINK?

Sarah Hauptman, co-owner of PHLster Holsters, was one of the instructors at the 2023 event. Her main goal was to help people at every skill level and to leave the community better than she found it. She was pleasantly surprised with the skills of the attendees.

"I wasn't sure what the skill level would be, but I was really pleased to see it was much higher than I was expecting. Usually, when we go to conventions there are a lot of people who are struggling with the very basic steps of concealment and they're kind of just starting on their journey, but this was really unique because it was a lot of women who were already carrying successfully. This also made it a good opportunity to kind of get into some of the more advanced topics we don't always get to. It was really satisfying to teach that skill level of participant."

Hauptman's favorite part of the event?

"The food," she laughed. But then continued, "It was really neat to see the spontaneous support from all of Shelley's friends. They put so much into making the event run smoothly and it was cool to see this outpouring of community because usually I see Shelley at other events and she's the one doing all the support work. So it was really cool to see all of her friends stepping up to support her."

Kandy Harrell, NRA instructor and owner of Gray Lady Self Defense in Summerville, S.D, has been attending The Mingle for the past three years. Her main goals are continuing education for herself as well as taking information back to share with her students.

"It's a great experience so I returned for three years in a row and

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It's been a great experience learning from so many different instructors I otherwise may not have been able to just due to their distance and where they hold classes."

Kandy Harrell, Owner
Gray Lady Self Defense

will be attending again in 2024," she said.

Harrell has enjoyed watching the growth of the event and learning from the phenomenal instructors.

"They have a really good cadre of people to reach out to who are willing to come and provide training. It's been a great experience learning from so many different instructors I otherwise may not have been able to just due to their distance and where they hold classes," she noted.

When asked her favorite part, Harrell replied, "I think just the networking part; meeting all these ladies from across the country that come to this event and creating those new friendships. It's great to be able to have one-on-one time with all these awesome ladies and the instructors and getting to know them a

little bit better on a personal level. I don't think anybody ever walks away and doesn't say what a great training it was. I highly recommend it and I would suggest any woman in the industry should ask for an invite and go. It's well worth their time."

WHAT SHOULD SOMEONE DO IF THEY WANT TO ATTEND THE MINGLE?

Hill explains the steps, "Go to our website, click on The Mingle and scroll down. They'll see an 'Add me to your invite list.' They will then be asked how they are involved in the industry. Once I receive that email, I will determine if they would be a good fit and if so, I will put them on my official invite list. Once they're on that list they will be invited every year after that and grandfathered in."

On January 1 every year, everyone on the invite list from the past years as well as the new people will get an e-mail that tells them about the upcoming year. On January 5, they will receive their link and passcode to register. It's first-come, first-serve, so with hundreds of invitations going out it fills up within a couple weeks.

The 2024 Mingle will be held May 18-19 in Dahlonga, Ga. [SI](#)

For more info: thecompletecombatant.com/the-mingle.html



BY AVA FLANELL

4 WAYS TO BOOST YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Like most industries, the firearms world has a mix of tech-savvy individuals and those who haven't made the leap into the world where good SEO (Search Engine Optimization) spells success. There's nothing wrong keeping old-fashioned marketing, but unless you live in a small town where you're the only source, your business needs an online presence for it to have a fighting chance — especially as people rely more heavily on online buying.

Here are a few easy steps to increase your online presence, regardless of how well you understand acronyms or internet marketing.

1. WEBSITE MUSTS

The first thing to do is make sure you have a website. This is what most people will look at before deciding to step foot into your establishment. Websites can be intimidating and expensive, which is why many of us choose not to have one. This is the worst thing you can do.

Simply having a website showing your services or products, along with your store hours, address and contact info is an essential start. If a website isn't in the budget, create one using tools available online. This isn't as difficult as it used to be, but if this isn't something

you'd like to put your time toward, start putting money aside for a professionally built website.

When looking for a web developer, be sure to shop around for quotes and references. Prices can be dramatically different for website development and the more features added, the more complex and expensive it gets. Starting with a basic website might be ideal at first. The backend of the website is user-friendly, so if anything needs to be changed you don't have to pay the company every time.

While building the site, be sure to use keywords people will likely include in their search. You can nerd out on this topic by searching for platforms that generate keyword analytics and even research how your competitors rank online, which is more advanced but might be worth doing in the future. There are also plug-ins designed to optimize your SEO with keywords for the site, pages and individual products. All you have to do is enter them into a program and the work is done.

Another way to increase SEO is to include a blog on your website. Writing numerous articles using keywords will help push your website to the top when someone searches for that keyword or phrase.

◀ Today, interacting with customers happens most when they're not even in your store. Melissa Flanell (left) sends follow-up emails after each class she teaches to boost reviews.

2. CREATE A GOOGLE BUSINESS LISTING

Once the website is created, the best way to determine your online presence is to Google your own company. This can be eye-opening, as you may realize how lacking your online presence might be. Your business might not appear at all, or the search brings up a lot of misinformation. Additionally, it might even show competitors or similarly named businesses in other towns.

To fix this, create a Google business listing. This can be done with a Gmail account or for a step-by-step list, search "Create a business profile on Google."

If you already have one, your company name should show up in a Google search, along with your address, business hours, reviews and more. Make sure all of the information is correct, especially the phone number, website and address.

Next, create a similar business account with Yelp. Although it's not as popular as it once was, other smaller search engines pull info from Google and Yelp. Additionally, be sure to create a profile for Apple Maps, which is fairly new and a bit foreign for many, but iPhones make up around 57% of smartphones in the U.S., and users rely on their device to quickly find a location.

3. POPULATE REVIEWS

Next, populate those reviews. Let's face it, this is a huge traffic driver when someone searches for a new place to check out. If you don't have many reviews, reach out to a few loyal customers who are familiar with your company and ask them to write one.

Melissa Flanell, manager of Dragonman's in Colorado Springs, Colo., relies on the company's large email list. To get additional traction, she includes a direct link to Yelp at the bottom of every promotional email Dragonman's sends.

"We have such great customers who leave Google reviews without any requests, but getting Yelp reviews can be a bit of a challenge," she stated.

Flanell is also a firearms instructor. After every class, she sends a follow-up email with direct links to Facebook, Yelp and Google for reviews. If you don't want to send out automated emails

“

There's nothing wrong keeping old-fashioned marketing, but unless you live in a small town where you're the only source, your business needs an online presence for it to have a fighting chance — especially as people rely more heavily on online buying.

or texts, encourage staff to ask the customers after they wrap up a transaction. Creating an employee rewards program to recognize when the customer includes the employee's name in a review is another incentive.

You can make a sign with something like “It Pays To Share Your

Opinion” and strategically locate it where it will get a lot of attention. Some businesses put a sign by the register that informs customers they will receive a small discount if they leave a review.

(If you want to take things up a notch, ask customers to mention keywords you would like to be searched for, but that might be a stretch.)

4. DON'T GIVE UP ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Lastly, social media platforms are important, but in the age of shadow banning — especially in this industry — you can't rely on it as much as other industries can. It's still important to claim your business name on all platforms and post as often as possible.

To start, it's a great way to populate more content when someone searches your business and might also generate organic followers. When creating a name for each social media platform, try your best

to be consistent with each handle. For example, if “Dave's Guns” isn't available, don't get creative with underscoring and other symbols. Instead, try “Dave's Guns Houston.” That name is more likely to be available on all platforms and it prevents customers from confusing you with someone else three states over.

Be sure to include your business address on all profiles. This helps bring in potential customers who might be doing a search. Also, when posting to social media, use hashtags for the state, city and county where you're located and add a location, such as your city. This helps fetch organic viewers who might turn into customers.

Following these easy steps is sure to put you on the map and increase business. Now customers can see what you have to offer, where you're located, when they can visit and they'll know what they can expect from the reviews they read. **\$1**

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2024 INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

Economic Pressures, Perceived Supply Levels & Innovation Primed To Impact Buying Behavior



— By Nancy Bacon & Rob Southwick

Looking back on 2023, some would say it was stronger than expected — while others would say the opposite. It all depends on where you stand in the market. As of the end of October 2023,

NICS firearm background checks were down 6% over the same period in 2022, yet were still 21% higher than 2019, which has become the industry benchmark for the last “normal” year.

Though numbers above our 2019 NICS benchmark

look good, they aren’t enough to move all of the high and stagnant firearm inventories throughout the distribution channel.

Additional insights from point-of-sale data, consumer perspectives and overall economic conditions help round out

the picture for 2023 and point to where we are headed in 2024.

POS DATA: THE GOLD STANDARD

Point-of-sale retail data is the gold standard when it comes to trends. Data representing more than 2,400 independent retailers from RetailBI, powered by Gearfire, indicates January to October same-store firearm inventories were down 5% versus the same months in 2022, while sales fell 16%. This trend reversed slightly



During the surge, many companies put new products on hold to meet the demand at hand. However, during slow times, innovation drives new demand and keeps brands relevant.

in October, probably in response to the Maine shooting tragedy and the Israeli crisis, and likely does not represent a new long-term trend.

The greatest burden from these year-to-date (YTD) sales declines is falling on manufacturers who are probably seeing even greater declines in orders received. Despite price discounts and rebate promotions at retail, the average price paid for firearms was up 2.5%, indicating consumers may be using price promotions to buy more higher-end firearms than they would have otherwise.

Ammunition is experiencing a slightly different trend in the market. Ammunition inventory was up 6% through October 2023, according to RetailBI, powered by Gearfire, though there was a decline in October. YTD sales fell nearly 9%, with a jump in October. With declining sales and increasing inventories, ammunition prices are falling, with the average price paid down 11%. This also means ammunition manufacturers are likely seeing greater declines in replenishment orders as inventories become less of a concern for the consumer.

LASTING IMPACT FROM "THE SURGE"

Brand management has new challenges this year. During the surge when shelves were empty, retailers brought in brands they may not have offered before to ensure products

were on the shelf to sell. As inventory then began to stack up, retailers focused on right-sizing their inventory — which included reducing their brand assortments. This has impacted many smaller and new market entrants.

The lack of open-to-buy dollars continues to limit orders for small and emerging brands. However, opportunities continue for lesser-known brands and products to remain in the assortment if they were well received during the surge and are now requested by consumers.

THE CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE

Though sales data may show one story, the ultimate retail sales driver is the consumer's perspective. They may not view the market as we in the trade do.

Despite high inventories throughout the channel, according to Southwick Associates' quarterly consumer tracking study, 20% of consumers reported firearms being less available in Q3 2023 than they were a year ago.

Other factors are affecting consumer demand for firearms, too. Offsetting increased demand from the minority of consumers who still see product shortages are inflation concerns, personal income changes and other economic uncertainties, as reported to us by consumers.

On the flip side, personal safety concerns, increasing global unrest

and domestic politics are still driving consumers to purchase firearms.

Although consumer purchase intentions do not always turn into sales, in Q3 2023, 50% of firearm and accessory consumers reported they were interested in purchasing a firearm in the next 12 months. Nearly half revealed discounts and rebates would increase their likelihood of buying, followed by retail availability.



Nearly a quarter of firearms consumers indicated a newly introduced model would increase their likelihood of buying a firearm in the next year.

It seems the market is still primed for sales. During the surge, many companies put new products on hold to meet the demand at hand. However, during slow times, innovation drives

new demand and keeps brands relevant.

With sales slowing, now is a good time for manufacturers to bring new ideas they have been sitting on to market. This opportunity is echoed by nearly a quarter of firearm consumers who indicated a newly introduced model would increase their likelihood of buying a firearm in the next year.

Remember, consumer perceptions are their reality. Availability of ammunition is still a concern for them, with 28% reporting ammunition was less available in Q3 2023 than a year ago. Just under 60% of consumers reported trying to buy ammunition in the last three months only to find it was out of stock.

In 2021, 70% of consumers reported to Southwick Associates their personal ammunition inventory was below their preferred level. This figure declined until the beginning of 2023. However, in the recent Q3 2023 survey, 50% report their ammunition inventory was below their preferred level.

Regardless of how much we might think consumers stockpiled ammunition in the past couple of years, only 8% report having personal ammunition inventory above their preferred level.

Like firearms, various factors are driving consumer ammunition purchases. Inflation, ammunition availability, personal income changes and economic uncertainty

are factors causing consumers to purchase less ammunition. Meanwhile, safety concerns (self-defense), domestic politics, global unrest and acquiring a firearm are the key factors increasing ammunition purchases.

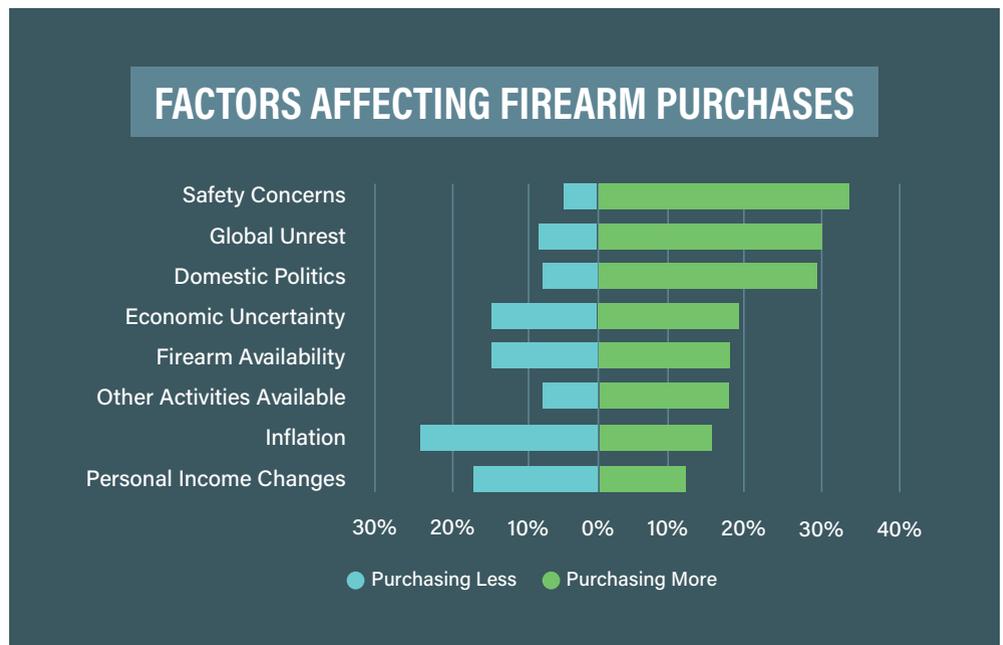
ECONOMIC PRESSURES

Various economic pressures now face consumers we haven't seen in previous sales downturns. Although unemployment remains low, and inflation has been slowing since last year, consumers are feeling a pinch as disposable personal income has flattened.

It's probable this trend will continue as unemployment ticks upward, though it should remain at healthy levels. Also, increasing credit card debt and late payments on credit cards and car loans indicate consumers may have less to spend.

Threats of a recession have loomed for some time now but have yet to come to fruition. Current thinking is a recession could happen in the first half of 2024, but the probability is falling and any recession would likely be mild and short. In the past, recessions have affected parts of the industry differently. While many do not lose their jobs during a recession, they will typically work fewer hours and have more time to participate.

During these times, many will hold off on larger purchases but will still purchase consumables or accessories such as



Firearm and accessory sales will likely — over time — fall back to levels seen in 2016. This is a slightly higher level than 2019.

ammunition, targets, reloading supplies, etc.

LOOKING FORWARD

For the past year, we have been advising the industry firearm and accessory sales would likely — over time — fall back to levels seen in 2016. This is a slightly higher level than 2019. We're almost there, but not quite, so the market's softening will conceivably continue into 2024.

Increased inventories are still certainly a concern. Manufacturers

who have the ability to reduce output without having to pay for expensive unused capacity will likely be fine. Manufacturers who ramped up production and associated long-term debt during the 2020–2022 run will probably have a harder time going forward, especially with higher interest rates expected to remain in place.

We expect consumer interest and demand for firearms to remain strong, meaning retailers should expect sales to stabilize

between the 2016–2017 levels, with localized exceptions as usual.

The challenge for our industry is to keep consumer interest high by offering new products and shooting opportunities, whether it is new shooting disciplines or greater access to ranges.

The consumer is still standing by our side, and it is up to us to manage capacity and inventories accordingly. Best of success in 2024! **SA**

Many of these insights are derived from proprietary data produced by Southwick Associates and are available to the industry. Additional reports are available regarding media usage by hunters and target shooters. For more information contact Nancy Bacon at Nancy@SouthwickAssociates.com.

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THE FUTURE OF RETAIL

Where Are We Headed?

By Hank Yacek

The novel ways of conducting business a few years ago are now the norm thanks to the quickened pace of the evolving retail environment. Setting yourself apart from the competition today requires new and innovative ways of engaging with customers and closing sales.

To start the year off right and highlight potential, let's explore the opportunities and challenges for 2024 and the direction retail is heading.

ELECTION YEAR BUMP EXPECTED

With 2024 being an election year, there's bound to be an increased interest from consumers in our industry. Historically, we generally see a bump in business, but for 2024 the ways to capture those valuable consumer dollars are starkly different than they were in 2020.

In 2020, the catchphrase was "Omnichannel Retail." This essentially meant letting the consumer shop when they want, how they want and where they want. As a result, retailers needed to add an e-commerce presence to their portfolio. It also meant offering services like order fulfillment where a customer could have the products shipped right to their door.

Last but not least, the last election

cycle also brought to the forefront the idea of BOPIS or "Buy Online Pick-up In Store." These were all the hot-to-trot trends of the era.

Flash-forward to 2024 and all those ways of doing business are the norm, rather than the exception. For those of you still not implementing these ways of doing business, 2024 should be a wake-up call to evolve!

CTV & LIVESTREAMING POTENTIAL

So, where will 2024 lead us? One of the biggest growth trends retail is experiencing is being called "CTV" or "Connected Television." (Think: QVC evolved.)

Sarah Travis, a senior VP at Target, has gone on record to say, "Shoppers can now scan a QR code in a Target ad they see on their TV screen at home and seamlessly add products directly to their cart for in-store pickup."

I've personally experienced this sort of product marketing and it works!

How can the firearm industry embrace this new way of doing business? Incorporate these same sorts of QR codes into your marketing pieces, be it TV, social media or direct-to-consumer marketing and drive customers to your e-commerce website. Better yet, develop an app for your store to close the sale even faster!

An extension of this also seeing rapid growth in the U.S. retail market is Livestreaming retail. In a recent *Forbes* article ("Livestream Shopping Is Not Going To Take Over E-Commerce"), contributor Nikki Baird stated the Livestream market in 2022 was roughly \$20 billion and represented only 2% of national e-commerce sales.¹ Global models, particularly out of China, indicate growth in the U.S. market could see Livestreaming swell to 20% of the e-commerce market.

Suffice it to say, those who adapt to this way of doing business would be poised to be the early adopters and dominate a potentially growing sector of our market. The fact Livestream retail also includes entertainment

means it can bring a fresh and new way of engaging with customers, establishing customer loyalty and, ultimately, convert into more sales and profits.

USING AI TO BATTLE COMPRESSED MARGINS

Speaking of profits, retail indicators highlight 2024 is showing to be a year of margin compression, where consumers will be focusing on price and value more when they take their purchasing journey. So how can we overcome this concern and maintain our bottom-line profits? Two letters: *A* and *I*. Yes, artificial intelligence.

“Retailers must shift their perspective on customer service interactions, including chatbots and email, from a mere transactional cost-saving approach to prioritizing authentic, humanistic experiences. Generative AI is an opportunity to deepen customer relationships and make customers feel respected and cared for, at scale,” said Sara Alloy, head of experience for the retail industry at Publicis Sapient.

Realize it or not, many retailers you have interacted with in the past year or two had you engage with an AI-driven chatbot. Deploying AI-driven chatbots on a website or an email allows businesses to create a far richer and more personalized experience for customers, while at the same time reducing the staffing overhead.

SMS MESSAGING

How else will consumers connect with retail in 2024? SMS text messaging represents another attractive option.

In 2023, Americans checked their phone an average of 144 times a day.² By leveraging your customer database, you can make laser-accurate marketing campaigns via SMS. Based on broad industry studies, SMS text messaging has an open rate around 98%, higher

“**GENERATIVE AI IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEEPEN CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS AND MAKE CUSTOMERS FEEL RESPECTED AND CARED FOR, AT SCALE.**”

Sara Alloy
Head of Experience for the Retail Industry
Publicis Sapient

than any other form of outbound communication, and is shown to be the most preferred means of communication between retailers and their customers. With companies specializing in SMS text messaging in the firearm retail space, there is no reason not to add this to your portfolio.

USE DATA!

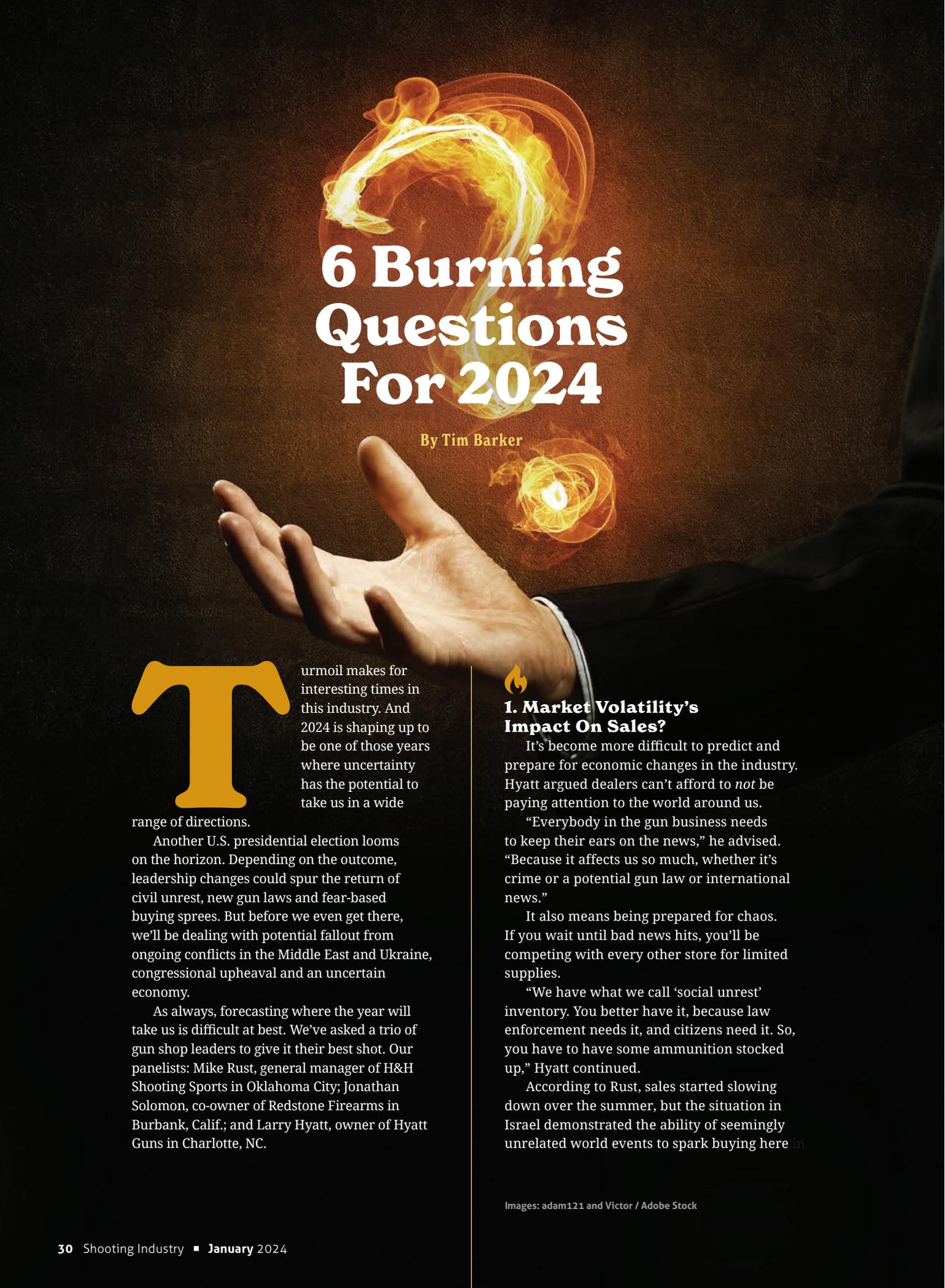
Lastly, one action every single retailer reading this can take today (though you may go kicking and screaming along the way) is to utilize both store-level as well as industry-level data to make planning decisions.

Access to data has never been easier via the store-generated data in your point-of-sale system (see the recent *SI* article, “Points Of Surprise!”) as well as subscription services giving a more industry-wide perspective. In times of market uncertainty, increased costs of doing business and price-conscious customers, optimizing the use of your cash through thoughtful leveraging of data will be a key facet of success in 2024.

As noted in the beginning, the evolution of retail continues to accelerate every year. It takes a thoughtful plan and a forward-looking vision just to keep pace. My encouragement to everyone reading this in 2024 is to onboard at least one new way of evolving your business to meet, if not exceed, the customer experience expectations going forward. 

1. forbes.com/sites/nikkibaird/2023/03/05/livestream-shopping-is-not-going-to-take-over-e-commerce
2. reviews.org/mobile/cell-phone-addiction

Dealers, which one of these suggestions are you most likely to implement? Let us know! Email editor@shootingindustry.com, or connect on LinkedIn or Facebook.



6 Burning Questions For 2024

By Tim Barker

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urmoil makes for interesting times in this industry. And 2024 is shaping up to be one of those years where uncertainty has the potential to take us in a wide

range of directions.

Another U.S. presidential election looms on the horizon. Depending on the outcome, leadership changes could spur the return of civil unrest, new gun laws and fear-based buying sprees. But before we even get there, we'll be dealing with potential fallout from ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, congressional upheaval and an uncertain economy.

As always, forecasting where the year will take us is difficult at best. We've asked a trio of gun shop leaders to give it their best shot. Our panelists: Mike Rust, general manager of H&H Shooting Sports in Oklahoma City; Jonathan Solomon, co-owner of Redstone Firearms in Burbank, Calif.; and Larry Hyatt, owner of Hyatt Guns in Charlotte, NC.



1. Market Volatility's Impact On Sales?

It's become more difficult to predict and prepare for economic changes in the industry. Hyatt argued dealers can't afford to *not* be paying attention to the world around us.

"Everybody in the gun business needs to keep their ears on the news," he advised. "Because it affects us so much, whether it's crime or a potential gun law or international news."

It also means being prepared for chaos. If you wait until bad news hits, you'll be competing with every other store for limited supplies.

"We have what we call 'social unrest' inventory. You better have it, because law enforcement needs it, and citizens need it. So, you have to have some ammunition stocked up," Hyatt continued.

According to Rust, sales started slowing down over the summer, but the situation in Israel demonstrated the ability of seemingly unrelated world events to spark buying here in

Images: adam121 and Victor / Adobe Stock

the U.S. This was due, at least in part, to rumors of potential Middle Eastern terrorists slipping across our southern border.

“My thought is that growth is going to continue probably through the election,” he said. “But it depends on what happens in Israel on whether fear buying is going to continue.”

Regardless, we may not see a significant surge in handgun buying.

“People already have them. Now, it’s time for rifles. They’re stocking up on 5.56 ammo and AR-15s are starting to disappear from the shelves,” Rust added.

While turmoil may spark buying across the country, there are often different factors at play in California. In this case, a new 11% sales tax on ammo and firearms is set to take effect in July.

“We can have a great financial year with the volatility of the industry, but we’re also going to get hit with so many different fees and new laws,” Solomon pointed out. “So, it’s going to kind of be a wash for us here in California. When it comes to local politics, we’re battling a war we can’t win.”



2. What Are The Most Exciting Trends?

When asked to name the trend he’s most excited about, Rust was quick to highlight double-stack 1911s, like Springfield Armory’s new Prodigy.

“There are some smaller companies giving it a go as well. And I believe you’re going to see it from some of the major players,” he said.

Given the restrictions imposed by California’s handgun roster, it can be tough for gun buyers in the state to enjoy some of the newer trends. Instead, customers are forced to focus on unregulated products like holsters and gadgets used to store guns in cars.

“That’s what we’re seeing right

now, which is great, because we make more profit on those type of products,” Solomon noted.

During and after the pandemic, there wasn’t a lot of innovation coming from manufacturers. This is slowly changing. Among the most welcome is the trend toward smaller semi-autos with easy-to-manipulate slides.

“Thank goodness for that,” Hyatt said, “because it doesn’t work having to deal with products designed for 19-year-old Marines, and then trying to get those products in the hands of a 65-year-old female.”



3. How Will Legal Challenges To Anti-Gun Laws Impact Sales?

There are a number of significant legal disputes being put forward by pro-2A organizations in courts across the country. Among the most closely watched fights concern the regulation restricting the use of pistol braces. For a short time, customers were able to use a brace as a quick and less expensive way to own a short-barreled rifle. That equation changed when the ATF revisited the issue, leaving retailers with inventory for which there is now no demand.

“We’re still waiting to see what’s going to happen with those lawsuits,” Rust said. “I’ve still got a lot of money invested in rifle-caliber pistols I can no longer sell. And I have no doubt there are other retailers out there who have a large amount of inventory in this kind of item.”

There’s also the potential for new laws requiring background checks for all gun sales — including private transfers. There will be income opportunities if that happens. It’s something H&H already does for people who prefer background checks before selling a gun to someone.

“We probably do one a week.



Everybody in the gun business needs to keep their ears on the news because it affects us so much, whether it’s crime or a potential gun law or international news.”

Larry Hyatt, Owner
Hyatt Guns
Charlotte, N.C.

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“The challenge isn’t getting those first-time shooters, it’s keeping them. We need to figure out a way to keep them better entertained and enthused with all shooting sports offers.”

Mike Rust, General Manager
H&H Shooting Sports
Oklahoma City

If it becomes law, I can see turning into a much larger number,” Rust predicted.

The uncertainty around court challenges is a good reason to take a conservative approach in terms of any inventory purchasing decisions that hinge on final rulings, Hyatt suggested.

“We’re going to wait to see what happens. Some of this is bad for business — these long, drawn-out court cases. But sometimes it makes people buy now because they worry they won’t be able to get something later,” he relayed.



4. Are First-Time Buyers Still A Force?

The industry welcomed millions of first-time gun buyers in the first two years of the pandemic. Rust said the problem facing dealers today isn’t welcoming them, but retaining them.

“The challenge isn’t getting those first-time shooters, it’s keeping them. We need to figure out a way to keep them better entertained and enthused with all shooting sports offers,” he noted.

It’s also important to remember customer service is key to helping those new shooters navigate an environment in which they may feel uncomfortable.

“We hire gun people to sell guns and we hire gun people to work the range. As longtime gun people, we feel like everybody should know what we know. The challenge we have, daily, with our team members is making sure they understand first-time gun people are asking questions because they don’t know. Part of our job is to be educators,” Rust said.

Solomon highlighted the importance of inclusivity.

“The bottom line is when it comes to inclusivity, especially in the African-American community, we’ve got to be able to feel like we’re wanted in that space,” he explained.

It’s also important to remember not every customer has \$700 to \$1,000 for their first gun.

“A lot of the people who we deal with have come from another store, where they feel like they were frowned upon when they said they had \$500 to spend. We have to understand not everybody who walks in the door has the disposable income of the guy who just left after spending \$3,000,” Solomon said.

Gun shops need to be more modern: think well-lit with clean bathrooms and friendly to all of their customers.

“What we don’t want is a grumpy guy at the gun shop who loves guns but hates people,” Hyatt stated. “Gosh, I’ve seen so many of those. They’re everywhere. The challenge is to get the right personality to give the customer good information without being arrogant or talking down to them.”



5. What Are The Biggest Threats?

There appears to be an increased strictness and lack of tolerance when it comes to following the ATF’s paperwork rules, Rust noted.

“The current administration has the ATF inspectors on a very short leash. Of course, the inspectors are going to report what they report. Now, the threshold to recommend loss of license has dropped considerably. It used to be a gross willful violation, like selling guns out the back door. Now it’s as simple as paperwork with a mistake on it. That mistake can cost your license and your livelihood,” he said.

According to Solomon, overreaction to shooting incidents threatens to put even more restrictions on gun rights.

“There’s this quick, heavy-handed legislation talk: ‘We need to outlaw this or outlaw that.’ All of these events are tragic and should not have occurred,” he said. “But legislation is only for those who are going to break the law. People who are going to go out and shoot up a school or house don’t give a damn about legislation. They don’t give a

damn about the law. Because if they did, they wouldn't do what they were doing."

Among the hidden threats to every gun store is the potential for loss of liability insurance, particularly in light of talks about taking away some of the product liability protections that shield firearms manufacturers, importers and retailers.

"If we can't get liability insurance at a reasonable cost, it could put a lot of us out of business. It's a huge risk for any of us who have capital invested. It's not talked about, but it is very frightening," Hyatt conveyed.



6. How Will 2023's Events Impact 2024?

By the latter part of 2023, handgun sales had largely slowed,

compared specifically to the previous two years. Rust predicts that slowdown is likely to continue, at least into the first part of the year.

"I think it has to do with the fact we saw such a boom in handgun sales in the past two or three years. It's almost the industry returning to normal. So, until things normalize back to 2019, I think we're going to continue to see a longer dip in handguns," he said.

Redstone Firearms has a heavy emphasis on education and training classes. Solomon has been disturbed recently to see so many inexperienced private instructors popping up out of nowhere — which risks creating a bad impression for new shooters who are trying to learn the basics in a safe setting.

"They're there to get a better understanding of what to do and how to do it. When you have instructors

who don't understand this, it makes it hard for those new shooters to come back and help the industry in a positive way. If they have a bad experience, they'll think all instructors are that way," Solomon reasoned.

To Hyatt, there's little reason to expect a change in the tepid sales pace of the latter part of 2023. Of course, it could be altered by social unrest, war or something similar.

"It looks to me like next year is going to be a continuation. There's going to be lower demand. And stores better have a good selection because nobody wants to drive to a physical store if they don't have products," he concluded. **SI**

What are your new year predictions?
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LEARN MORE



By Carolee Anita Boyles

Customer service and a vibrant customer experience are the backbone of building relationships with clients. Savvy retailers pull out all the stops when it comes to providing both. Here, five retailers share what they've done to ensure the customer does, indeed, come first.

1. "ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RECOGNITION COMES FIRST."

Bill Roney has owned The Outdoorsman of Santa Fe in Santa Fe, N.M., for more than 50 years.

"We're one of a dying breed, in that our business is inside an indoor mall," he said. "This was the first indoor mall in northern New Mexico, and it's populated by independently owned businesses rather than by a lot of national chains. So, it's a very friendly destination. Most of the stores in this mall have the same attitudes we do."

According to Roney, the most important

components of customer service are to be friendly, respectful and honest.

"So many people don't even acknowledge the customer when he comes in the door," he observed. "Acknowledgement and recognition comes first. From there — after you establish the relationship by being friendly and polite and saying hello — you can begin asking questions of the potential customer."

Understanding what the customer came in for is essential to understanding how you can ultimately serve him or her.

"Those questions help you identify and locate what the customer wants and needs," Roney affirmed.

Roney looks for people who already have these skills, but he also trains new hires who may not be fully versed in customer service.

"Certainly, we hope to find people who have participated in the retail environment before and are somewhat familiar with and knowledgeable of the products we sell," he said. "After that, we have our qualifying questions we ask potential hires to determine what kind of personality they have and what experience they have. We want people who are not loud or brash, but respectful. Ours is a Christian store, so this is all very important to us."

Beyond basic customer service, Roney said he emphasizes two words make a significant difference: “Please” and “Thank you.”

“In our surroundings, we try to have a family-friendly environment,” he explained. “We’re very sensitive as to how we display merchandise, and which merchandise we choose to display.”

2. “FIND OUT WHAT MAKES THEM HAPPY.”

At Doug’s Shoot’n Sports in Taylorsville, Utah, Manager Dave Larsen contends the most important thing is to stay customer focused.



“If you don’t know what they’re looking for, you can’t possibly help them. Once you determine what their needs are, then you can work to take care of them.”

Dave Larsen, Manager
Doug’s Shoot’n Sports
Taylorsville, Utah

“You’re not going to sell someone a custom gun if they’ve come in for a production gun,” he said. “You also need to pay attention to the timeframe and get them taken care of quickly — if that’s what they’re looking for — or sit and talk if they want to. The most important thing is to find what makes them happy.”

To do this, according to Larsen,

his staff makes a point of greeting each customer as he or she comes in the door.

“Then we ask them what they’re looking for, what brings them in the door today,” he shared. “If you don’t know what they’re looking for, you can’t possibly help them. Once you determine what their needs are, then you can work to take care of them.”

If he doesn’t have what the customer is looking for, Larsen does whatever he needs to do to find it.

Because Doug’s is small, Larsen’s emphasis for enhancing the customer experience is on maintaining a robust inventory.

“I have 4,700 guns here, and about 1.5 million rounds of ammo, plus all the accessories,” he said. “We also have a spectator area with windows behind our shooting range. You can step into the spectator area and have a seat and watch your family shoot inside the range.”

3. “IT WAS THE FIRST THING I PUT IN THE NEW STORE.”

Before she closed her store in late 2022, Battle Born Ammunition & Firearms. Owner Kristy Scott had a kids’ area in her Carson City, Nev., store so parents could bring young children in while they shot on her range.

“It was the first thing I put in the new store,” she confirmed. “Our old store wasn’t big enough for a kids’ area. We would constantly have kids coming in with their dad and mom. I knew I needed an area for them where they could play.”

In fact, Scott said, she first started thinking about a kids’ area because she had several customers who were stay-at-home dads. She watched them struggle with young kids when they came into the store and wanted to find a way to help them.

The kid-friendly atmosphere of the store extended to the restroom.

“I had a changing table there,” Scott shared. “I know it’s not exactly for kids, but it sure did make things

easier for parents with babies.”

The family-friendly atmosphere in the store enhanced the customer experience for everyone.

“Once when a particular family came in and I was with my bookkeeper and didn’t stop to hug their 2-year-old, the little girl screamed and hollered and said, ‘I want to STAY!’” she recalled. “Their other daughter, who was 8, told her parents she wanted to go to Battle Born. So, her parents came to the store because she wanted to. She had her own little Smith & Wesson M&P 15-22 and a .22 handgun, and she wanted to become a competition shooter.”

That said, Scott made sure the parents knew they still were responsible for watching their own kids.

“I wasn’t a babysitter,” she added. “I let parents know there was an area where the kids could go to color or play, but I didn’t say I’d watch them.”

4. “CUSTOMERS ARE KING.”

Nicole Guvenoz is the compliance officer at GAT Guns in East Dundee, Ill., where the store’s philosophy is “Customers are king.”

“In our industry, we can’t go as far as to say the customer is always right,” she noted. “We’re not like Starbucks where we can just say, ‘The next one’s on us.’ But what I tell the staff is it’s free to be kind — and kindness can go a long way.”

To their staff, good customer service and kindness start at the sale of the gun and extend through the life of the gun.

“We sell a lifetime warranty with all of our firearms,” she said. “We want the customer to come in through the life of their shooting career. We want them to come in, buy their gun, learn about it, shoot it here, buy their ammunition here and bring it in when they’re ready to trade it in. Then we buy it from them, and they buy a new gun from us. All of this, in the big picture, is all about

customer service and kindness and how it can translate into a lifelong customer.”

GAT Guns relies on the guns themselves to enhance the customer experience.

“We have the largest inventory of guns anywhere around,” Guvenoz stated. “It’s what brings people to us. Plus, we have been here for decades, so we have longevity and a reputation.”

The store also has a large selection of knives and a massive inventory of ammunition.

“All of it is what brings people to us,” she reaffirmed. “We have more of everything than anyone else, including the local big-box stores.”

5. “VALUE OF LISTENING AND FOLLOW THROUGH.”

At Trinity Ordnance in Fort Worth, Texas, owner Richard Dennis tells his employees the most important things are to listen and to follow through.



“All of this, in the big picture, is all about customer service and kindness and how it can translate into a lifelong customer.”

Nicole Guvenoz, Compliance Officer
GAT Guns
East Dundee, Ill.

“We do in-person training on the value of listening and follow through. When we hire a new employee, we go over situations that might occur and discuss the best way to handle each one,” he explained. “Most of what we do, however, is just on-the-job training as issues come up.”

To further enhance the customer experience, the store provides a comfortable waiting area where customers can sit while they wait for background checks to go through. The classroom area also has comfortable seating for students. The store keeps complimentary bottled water available in both areas at all times.

Five different stores, five different means to accomplish the goal of creating a better experience for customers. In this day and age, when customers can shop from literally anywhere, little touches like these can make the difference between a one-time purchase and a lifelong customer. **S**

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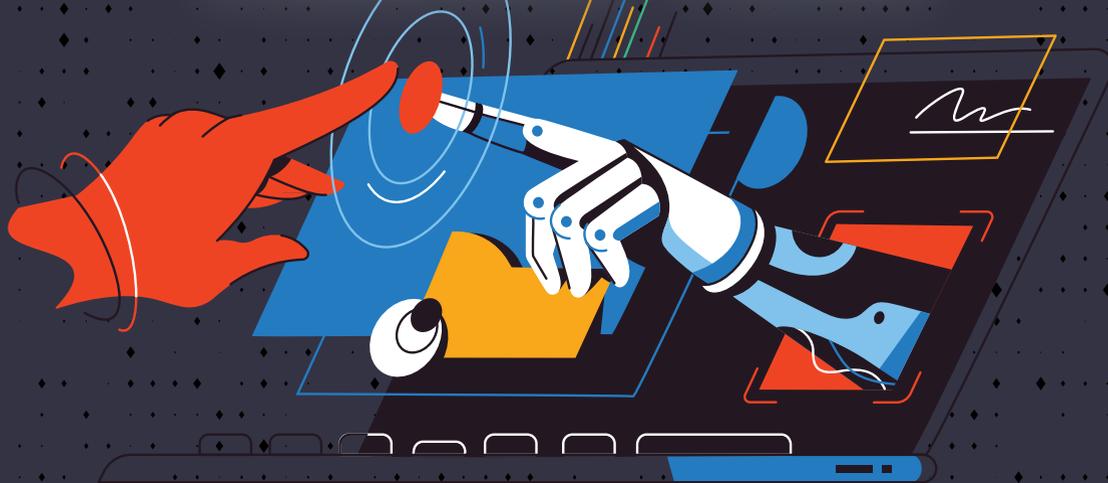


Image: Kit8 d.o.o. / Adobe Stock

NAVIGATING THE CROSSHAIRS OF AI IN GUN SHOPS— EMBRACE OR RESIST?

By Ashley McGee

From “The Terminator” and “Westworld” to the Stanley Kubrick classic “2001: A Space Odyssey,” there’s no shortage of movies, books and television shows warning us against the dangers of artificial intelligence (AI). So it makes sense why the seemingly sudden boom in AI we saw last year left us scrambling to try and close Pandora’s box — particularly

those in the shooting industry who historically have fallen in the “late majority” or even “laggard” categories of the technology adoption curve. But the reality is many of us have been using AI for years, whether we’ve realized it or not.

In today’s fast-paced business world, independently owned firearms dealers and shooting ranges need every advantage they can get to not only survive, but thrive. Artificial intelligence offers innovative ways to streamline operations, improve customer experiences and ultimately drive growth. Here are just a few ways AI can help increase your business’s efficiency and profitability.

AUTOMATING TEDIOUS TASKS

A recent survey by Monday.com, a cloud-based project management software provider, revealed nearly 55% of workers spend five or more

hours each week on mundane and repetitive tasks that demand little creativity. When you own or manage a small business — which requires wearing multiple hats — these tasks can significantly slow down operations and productivity.

AI-powered tools like Zapier, Asana and ClickUp can automate tasks such as calendar entries, meeting scheduling, document routing and data transfers. This not only frees up valuable time, it also ensures these tasks are executed with precision.

“There are certainly valid cyber security concerns to consider,” said Justin Morrissey, director of social media for NSSF. “At NSSF, we don’t use AI in a way that first comes to mind for many people, like to write content, but we do utilize various automation features, which are built into our existing software programs. In order to be more efficient, you need to optimize your processes and cut out as many tedious tasks as possible.”

Morrissey provided several real-world examples of AI applications that can be helpful to those working within the firearms industry. Tools like Trello have created frameworks to help teams manage work efficiently, ensuring tasks are tracked and completed seamlessly.

Sweepstakes programs can automatically promote additional entries on social media, eliminating the need for manual posting. Moreover, Zapier streamlines information flow between programs, making it easier to handle sales, customer inquiries and more.

What tasks can you automate or eliminate? For the next week, take inventory of every single mundane and/or repetitive task you complete and go from there.

ENHANCING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

AI can also be a valuable tool for understanding and engaging your customers better. By leveraging AI-driven analytics tools, features often included in a CRM system, you can

predict customer preferences and uncover trends in buying behavior. This data-driven approach enables a business to create more targeted ads and discounts, enhancing marketing efforts and customer satisfaction.

Morrissey emphasizes AI can help businesses make more informed decisions, leading to real, authentic interactions with customers.

“You need to know what matters most to your business and your customer so they have the most simple, streamlined experience,” he said.

**Ultimately,
the role of AI
should be as
an enhancer
of human
capabilities
rather than a
substitute.**

“Just be sure you’re safeguarding your voice,” Morrissey advised. “We want to make real, authentic human decisions that represent who we are as a business and as an industry.”

Maintaining an authentic voice is vital in the firearms industry, where trust and credibility are paramount. Rightfully so, business owners worry AI may dilute the authenticity of their brand, making it apparent they’re not personally engaged with customers or content creation.

Rather than relying on AI tools to write customer-facing content, like a blog post for your website or utilizing a chatbot to field website questions

or social media messages, Morrissey suggests instead using it to help with behind-the-scenes tasks — like SEO, where a computer is the audience.

“You can’t expect a chatbot to reply in a way that really answers a customer’s questions,” he noted.

VIEW IT AS AN ENHANCER, NOT A SUBSTITUTE

Ultimately, the role of AI should be as an enhancer of human capabilities rather than a substitute.

While stigma and concerns surrounding AI adoption are understandable, it is crucial for firearms business owners to recognize the potential for growth and efficiency AI offers.

“It’s okay to be conservative and be smart about it, but the worst thing you can do is ignore it,” observed Morrissey. “With all the challenges businesses face in today’s climate, it’s not realistic for ranges and retailers to think they can continue to do things the way they’ve always done them.”

Those interested in learning more about the practical applications of AI are encouraged to attend the beginner-friendly SHOT University presentation titled “A Practical Guide to Using ChatGPT to Make Life Easier & Business Better” on Wednesday, Jan. 24, at SHOT Show 2024.

Bravo Store Systems, the first all-in-one software provider for specialty retailers including gun stores, will share how its employees use ChatGPT in their daily work, with practical examples and success stories. The presentation will include live ChatGPT demonstrations and actionable strategies on how to integrate AI into customer interactions, inventory management and marketing efforts to improve your gun store or range’s operational efficiency and growth. To register, visit shotshow.org/shot-university.

Here in the new year, it’s the perfect time to consider fresh ways of doing business. Whether or not AI is “the answer” is up to you — but, as you can see above, it’s certainly worth a look. **SI**

BY JAY PINSKY

MENTORSHIP IN THE OUTDOOR SPACE

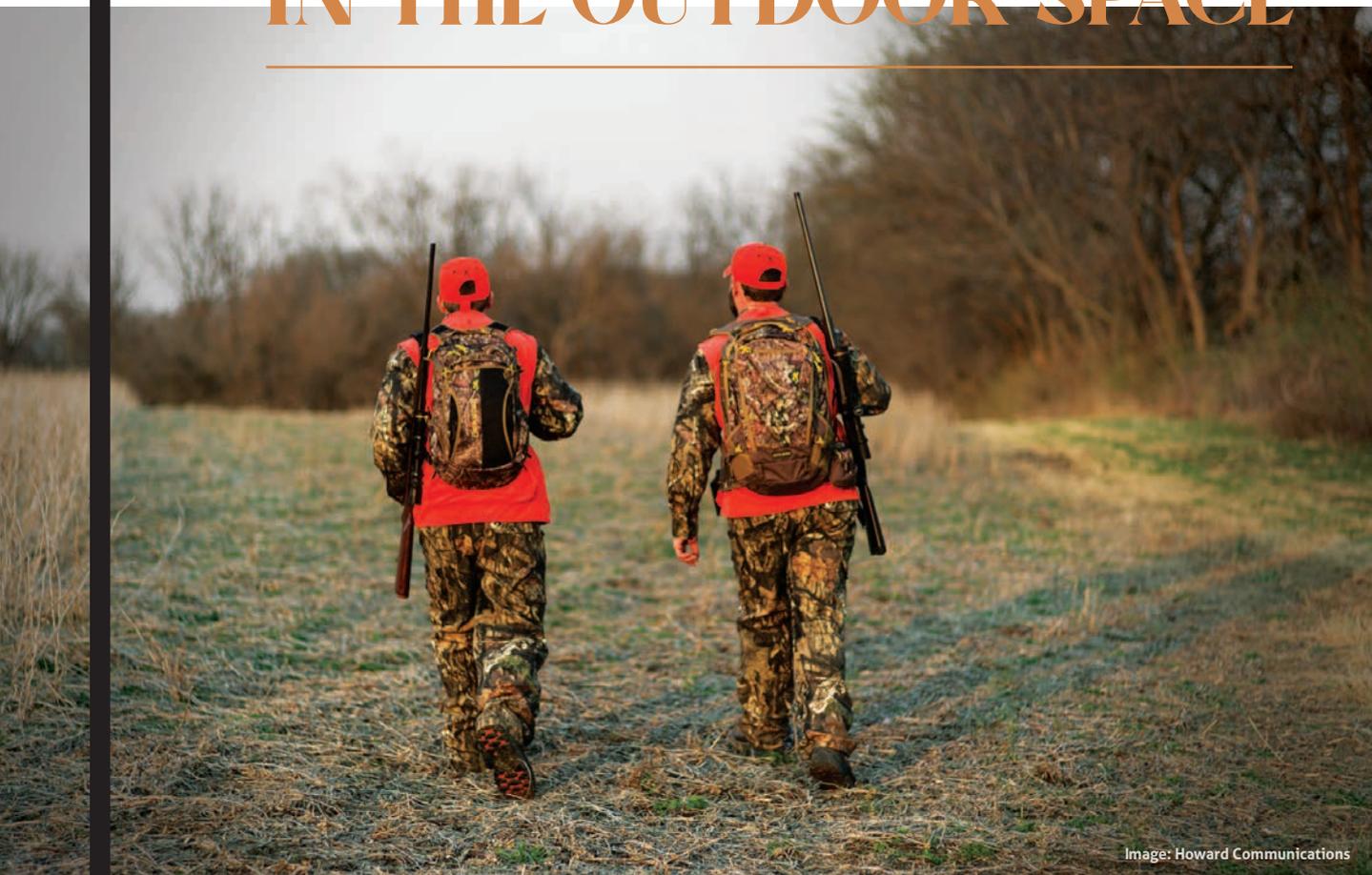


Image: Howard Communications

How important is mentorship in the outdoor space? On May 28, 2022, I married the woman of my dreams and together we have built the lives of our dreams. I owe it all to my childhood hunting mentor, Danny Towe.

Danny was a large man with a gentle soul from West Virginia who made his home in Hope

Mills, N.C., where I grew up. I met Danny at Stoney Point Baptist Church when I started attending a Royal Ambassadors youth program. It didn't take him long to figure out how to get and keep my attention: by teaching me anything about hunting.

Over several years, Danny spent many a Saturday teaching me how to hunt — or so I thought. We talked about wild game, habitat and guns. He taught me to respect the animals I chased, the woods we shared and the firearms we used. He taught me patience, attention to detail, compassion and mercy, all under the umbrella of hunting.

But his goal wasn't teaching me how to be a better hunter; it was to be a better man. Once I remembered and finally applied what Danny taught me as a child, I ended up with a lot more than trophy bucks — I ended up with a trophy life.

That's how important mentorship is.

LESSONS LEARNED

Mentorship can be and often is the single best influence on a person's ability to understand, cope and excel at life. As mentors, we need to understand the potential; we must do far greater good than just empower a first deer, shooting match trophy or outdoor lifestyle. We must yearn to inspire and empower a good life.

If you mentor with the goal of a trophy life, you'll end up with a good hunter because they're the same. You'll also have good nurses, welders, teachers, husbands, wives and friends.

Several years ago, for my master's capstone project at Virginia Tech, I started a youth nonprofit called The Green Bow Foundation. The idea came from more than a year of research that revealed the decline of ethical hunting advocates. It meant only one thing: we had to build a process that took someone who knew nothing about hunting and teach them everything the perfect hunter needs to be.

The process of building and running The Green Bow Foundation taught me quite a bit about our community, our society, our adversaries and, of course, myself. No surprise, I also learned a lot about successful mentorship.

Mentorship isn't about teaching someone how much you know. It's about empowering them to learn as much as they can. Ego is both a learning and teaching disability.

When it comes to children, you must account for more than just their curiosities; you must

be welcoming to their peers, role models and parents' concerns. You must earn everyone's trust first — and having integrity is the best first step. The relationship you build as a mentor is the critical bridge between your knowledge and the knowledge your mentee is willing to receive.

Don't set limits for people. Set expectations and let them rise to them. The difference here has ramifications that will be felt in a person's life far beyond the task.



Mentorship isn't about teaching someone how much you know. It's about empowering them to learn as much as they can. Ego is both a learning and teaching disability.

DON'T SET LIMITS

Speaking of limits, don't limit yourself to one mentor's opinion or method for learning. On this note, I've connected with several far better mentors in our community for their opinions, advice and reflections on mentorship in the outdoor business community and the outdoors in general.

First up is one of our industry's best and most beloved mentors — Larry Weishuhn.

"I personally consider mentoring as a duty," said Weishuhn. "I grew

up with and around guns. I learned much from family and friends and from years of being in the shooting/hunting industry. If I can introduce someone to the proper ways of gun safety, shooting parlay and respect for life, then I am doing it right!"

Weishuhn expanded on his thoughts when asked about mentorship as a member of the outdoor community.

"As a member of the shooting/hunting/wildlife conservation 'industry,' I do think it important those of us who are in the industry mentor others whenever possible because obviously, as someone within the industry, there should be some 'real knowledge' based on years of experience," he said. "As an outdoor 'communicator' we should have some communicative skills, taking what someone new to shooting might look at as being very complicated and breaking it down in layman's terms."

PROVIDE "ORGANIC" MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

One of the most complex parts of learning to hunt — in the outdoor industry specifically — is organic mentorship just isn't there anymore. Regardless of their age of discovery, new hunters often must find mentors well outside their social circles — a fact not lost on another great industry mentor, Adam Weatherby, CEO of Weatherby Inc.

"Hunting is quite difficult to get into if you didn't have a friend or family member who introduced it to you growing up," said Weatherby. "From gear to access, to field dressing the animal ... hunting can be quite involved. Therefore, mentorship in the hunting space is crucial to introducing new people to the outdoors."

Weatherby added how his company prioritizes mentorship among its employees.

"In fact, Weatherby has a mentor program with our employees where



Mentorship isn't just about older generations leading younger ones — have experienced shooters, hunters or outdoorsman mentor others in your companies who show an interest, but just don't know how to get started in the outdoor space. (Image: NSSF)

a more experienced hunter can sign up to be a mentor and walk a first-time hunter through the entire process of taking their first big game animal locally here in Wyoming," he said.

Let's hear from an industry expert who built an entire business model off superb mentorship, Shoot Like A Girl's Founder, Karen Butler.

"Mentorship is extremely important to our industry," stated Butler. "SLG2 Inc.'s data indicates more than 26% of people we interact with don't hunt but want to. People just don't know what they don't know — or even need to know — about taking those first steps. Although there is a plethora of information online, it can get overwhelming and confusing for a seasoned hunter, let alone a new hunter."

Butler suggests having a mentor accompany someone new for all facets of the hunt.

"From pre-hunt preparations to the hunt itself, to the aftermath of the harvest (cleaning, preparing and cooking the meat), having a mentor present along the way makes the initial entry much more enjoyable," she said. "It's important new hunters

not only have the experience of hunting but also enjoy the relationship we build with nature while we're hunting."

MENTORSHIP AMONG FELLOW MENTORS

Let's shift our focus from mentoring new outdoor participants to professional mentorship within the industry, where the need is just as great.

Federal Ammunition Conservation Senior Manager Jon Zinnel is one mentorship voice of leadership to listen to on this topic.

"Mentorship is extremely important for the shooting sports industry as it truly is a small industry with lots of longtime personal connections," he noted. "The business structure may be similar to other industries, but with the political environment and sensitivity to many of the products we manufacture and sell, it's important to truly understand the products and the heritage behind many of them."

Jon shared his best advice to new mentors and mentees in and out of our industry, emphasizing experience.

"Whether you're bringing a

newcomer under your wing at a sales meeting to show them the ins and outs or providing them insight into how connections made now can benefit them in the future, experience matters," said Zinnel. "Advice for the mentees would be to buckle up and get after it. When there is an opportunity, regardless of how challenging or uncomfortable it may look, I would advise jumping right in with both feet to truly understand the industry. An example would be someone who may want to get into sales or marketing; they should jump in to understand the manufacturing of the products so they can truly understand the business full circle."

When I asked Jim Curcuruto, executive director of the Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation, he wasted no time advocating for B2B mentorship within the outdoor industry. He immediately highlighted who he felt best-epitomized mentorship.

"Ruger is the best example of a culture of mentoring/succession planning I've heard of in this industry," said Curcuruto. "Steve Sanetti, previous Ruger CEO and former NSSF president/CEO, told me Bill Ruger mentored him. Bill even helped Steve get his law degree to make him more prepared to take over as CEO one day. Then, after Steve left Ruger, I heard Mike Fifer give credit to Steve for mentoring him. Chris Killooy, current Ruger CEO, has repeatedly mentioned Mike Fifer was a great mentor to him."

These are just two sources, of many, in the industry — there are lots of potential mentors out there.

REMEMBER THE GOAL

Regardless of how you choose to mentor — or be mentored — remember the final goal isn't a trophy harvest but a trophy life. Make it your goal and at the end of the day, you'll have more success in and out of the deer stand — and so will the people you care about. **SI**

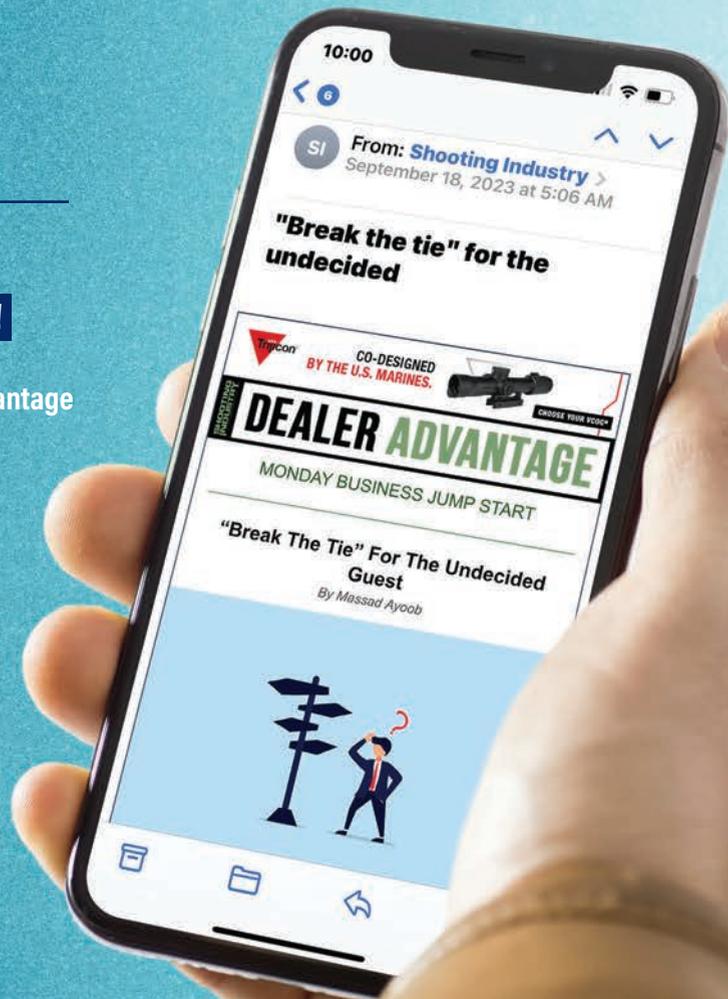
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By Michelle Scheuermann

The Costs Of Putting On A Gun Retreat?

PRICELESS.



SIG ROSE Retreat Builds Community

Imagine: You're in the lobby of a 5-star hotel. You're immediately greeted by smiling faces and handed a large tote bag full of swag — all in branding, of course. The guest of honor of the event is at registration to welcome you and ask if you have any questions. You're *not* handed a sticky label "Hello My Name Is" badge, but rather a branded, magnetized and customized badge. You're overwhelmed by the generosity and can't wait to see what the next few days hold.

This was the beginning of the SIG SAUER ROSE Retreat held this past October in Chicago. A retreat meant to bring women together for a unique, shared experience of learning about personal safety —

all under the watchful eye of the guest of honor, Lena Miculek, and support from the SIG PR and event marketing team. This "retreat" is an immersive experience with SIG SAUER meant to not only make each attendee comfortable shooting their SIG ROSE handgun, which was designed in collaboration with Lena, but to excite and empower them to be lifelong SIG SAUER ambassadors. And all it took was three days together.

FEMALE-FOCUSED

An all-ladies event is nothing new, but having even the firearm and safety instructors be women is still relatively novel to the shooting industry. Lena personally spent a whole day showing each of the 30 women at the retreat her best handgun shooting tips and techniques — things she was taught by her instructors — and she didn't hold back.

Image: Rudzhan / Adobe Stock



Events like the SIG ROSE Retreat will motivate people to purchase. We see it in our classes at our store, where it empowers women to love shooting without their husbands there. We've seen them buy multiple guns."

Rebecca Pesmenski, Operations Manager
Second Amendment Sports
McHenry, Ill.

"Having a female instructor was invaluable to me," shared Rebecca Pesmenski who works at Second Amendment Sports in McHenry, Ill. "I've been shooting for six years and having Lena say there is 'no one way' is important to hear. Some instructors out there say there's only one way — which isn't true. It's based on your strength, on your body, your eye dominance and more."

Tina Hopson, who owns Hoosier Bullets and Training in Indiana with her husband, agreed.

"I asked the owner of our local hunting and fishing store if I could borrow the SIG ROSE to show my ladies training groups. I let people shoot it and had three women buy the gun after shooting it with me," she said. "I got nothing from it other than the pleasure of making sure these ladies were comfortable shooting. I told the store owner he should have a female firearms instructor in his store on the weekends, at the very least. Nothing against the men in the store, but they will sell them what they think they need and not tell them the benefits of a different firearm."

The power of an all-women group is not to be underestimated. Michelle Goff, a veterinarian technician from Crawfordsville, Ind., said she wanted to attend this ROSE Retreat to acquire more training, to meet Lena and spend time with like-minded women.

"It seems gun companies offer just one-day events, or even a few hours, with their local reps, and usually 75% of those classes are men. I think having a women-only event is very powerful. I don't feel as awkward," she shared.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

While the SIG ROSE Retreat took the "surprise and delight" motto to the nth degree, it doesn't have to be this way to gather local women together. Hopson said she also told her local hunting and fishing store owner his atmosphere was "intimidating for women." When he asked her how to change this, she suggested a ladies' day. He agreed and let her run with it.

"For the past three months, I've been reaching out to vendors, such as SIG SAUER, Smith & Wesson and others, to get swag and items to give these women. The store owner agreed to give all ladies 10% off one day only, including firearms. We're simply trying to offer them firearms training in a comfortable environment," she concluded.

Pesmenski said her store in Illinois does offer private instruction, ladies' nights, couples classes and is a female-forward store.

"I appreciate SIG putting this retreat on as it shows women there is a place for them in this industry, because it is hard. It's hard as a woman. Since the pandemic, we went from 10% women to about 50% women coming into the store," she shared. "We have



(Left) Lena Miculek gives a concealed carry demonstration to attendees before they go hands-on with a gun-cleaning session (right). (Images: SIG SAUER)



Top: Not all aspects of a retreat need to be gun-focused. Here, ROSE Retreat attendees ventured out on a boat cruise — providing opportunities to connect on a more personal level during the event. **Bottom:** SIG ROSE branding was prominent during the event. Here, Michelle Scheuermann (left) and Samantha Piatt, SIG SAUER director of media relations and communications, strike a pose.

women who come just for the classes because they want a community they can't find anywhere else."

Ashley Smith, who hails from just an hour north of New York City, is building a gun community from the ground up thanks to a new-build gun store she and her husband are tackling.

"I was trying to figure out where I fit into this new business idea. I got my concealed carry for New York and have been trying to learn as much as I can. I think where I come in is for the women who want to learn about firearms. Women are going to come into the store and they are going to see me, not some big burly dude behind the counter, and they won't be afraid to ask questions because I will say, 'Hey, come in, let's have coffee!'" she exclaimed. "Building a community is so

important, which is why I'm trying to do it now for our store."

RAISING CONFIDENCE & SHATTERING STEREOTYPES

One aspect of the SIG ROSE Retreat is the underlying confidence-building that occurs from being surrounded by other capable women, being comfortable asking questions and being encouraged.

"I've gained more confidence already just in this short time at this retreat and I can't wait to get home to tell my friends and encourage them to learn more like me," continued Smith. "I'm a PTA mom, I'm a Cub Scout den leader. I'm *that* person. But I'm also *this* person. We all have different backgrounds at this retreat. We all have the same fears and feelings, even if we came to this event from different

roads."

Cheryl Nissen, who builds homes with her husband in Toledo, Ohio, grew up shooting with her dad and now shoots with her husband.

"It's one thing when your husband is telling you something but it's another when an eight-time world champion [Lena] is telling how you to shoot," she remarked. "It is just different. I'm really enjoying the women I am meeting here. None of my friends are into shooting back at home. My husband wants to get into competitive shooting and maybe I will get into it, too."

CREATING LIFELONG CUSTOMERS

Perhaps the biggest takeaway from this three-day immersive experience was how excited each woman was to buy the ROSE (or a second version of it), more accessories or, frankly, all of the above.

These 30 women are now walking, talking ambassadors for SIG, which can be seen in the SIG ROSE Community on Facebook and on each of their social media channels. When these ladies were asked if they are purchasing because of the event, the overwhelming response was an enthusiastic "Yes!"

"Oh, heck yeah I'm going to buy things," Nissen nodded. "Are you kidding me? I already told my husband 'I am buying the ROSE .380.' I bought things before I even came to the retreat from SIG. But I need it all now."

"Events like the SIG ROSE Retreat will motivate people to purchase," agreed Pesmnski. "We see it in our classes at our store, where it empowers women to love shooting without their husbands there. We've seen them buy multiple guns. That's what we like seeing versus the husband coming in to buy for their wife thinking 'Oh, she'll like this' and she doesn't. So, they come back and trade it in. And she doesn't like that one and it's a vicious cycle. Let them just pick it out themselves!"

It's difficult *not* to get excited about a company and staff who spent so much effort on the details of the event (See "Surprise & Delight" sidebar).

"I'm going to buy everything," said Smith excitedly. "I got the green light, and I got the credit card. I already have the P365-XL, but I need to get the .380 after shooting it with Lena here." **SI**

“Surprise & Delight”

How do you “surprise and delight” your guests at events? Here are a few takeaways from the SIG ROSE Retreat to consider:

Upgrade Where It Makes Sense.

The small gesture of upgrading the name badges from the wanky “Hello My Name Is” sticker that ALWAYS comes off to a real badge shows this relationship is long term.

Don’t Give All The Goodies At Once.

We were given a tote bag when checking in but were also given little gifts throughout the next few days. Constantly receiving something was always delightful.

Branding Matters.

By its very nature, the ROSE logo and brand lends itself to beautiful display opportunities. The SIG event marketing team

had branded SIG ROSE pillows at the VIP lounge at the gun range; roses were always displayed on the tables and the soft mauvy pink of the brand carried throughout all materials.

Little Things Count.

We were given so much, and most of the group had to fly home. SIG was one step ahead with pre-labeled boxes ready to ship all our goodies home for us — on their dime with two-day FedEx. Not having to worry about how to haul all the items home took the stress level down a notch.

Give Free Time. Yes, it is an immersive retreat, but even ladies need down time to catch up on emails/work (horrors!) or just take a walk for fresh air to digest all you learned.

Immediately Set Up A Community.

Immediately after the event, share emails and photos with all the ladies and encourage them to stay in touch. If possible, offer them discounts to keep the love growing as they’ll want to capitalize on all the things they learned.

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By Massad Ayoob

SAFE & SECURE

A Trusted Resource For Firearms Owners

A customer in the midst of a complicated move, a divorce, a legal proceeding or even a life crisis might need a safe place to store his or her guns for a while. Some dealers already do that.

At the Gun Rights Policy Conference (co-hosted by the Second Amendment Foundation and Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms) in Phoenix last September, I ran into the folks from Hold My Guns — a national program for FFLs to facilitate such a process.

Here in a Q&A format, Hold My Guns Founder and Executive Director Sarah Albrecht shares some insights about the program, and what it offers to our readers.

SI: What is the liability situation for a Hold My Guns FFL dealer if he returns a firearm to a person who had suicidal ideation, appears to be over it, but later kills himself with the gun the dealer returned?

SA: Our legal counsel, Joshua Prince, Esq., (SAF Executive Director Adam

Kraut used to work at his firm) went to great lengths to create a customer-facing contract that protects the customer, FFL partner and Hold My Guns (HMG) nonprofit. It includes hold-harmless wording and the customer attests they're using the storage for lawful purposes.

Additionally, the storage service is compliant with federal, state and local laws pertaining to the transfer of firearms (custodial storage mimics a consignment return process), which includes an ATF 4473 (aka Firearms Transaction Record), where the gun owner is attesting they're transferring for lawful purposes, and are not prohibited. Passing a background check is required.

HMG Storage Partners do *not* ask why firearms are being stored; for all the FFL knows, the customer is going on vacation — which is one of several reasons why gun owners store firearms. HMG partners must carry liability insurance and add HMG as additional insured. Not asking why, attesting in the contract, waiver language in the contract, filling out a federal form attesting again and passing a background check all help to

reduce liability. Please know we have not encountered being sued for this purpose, so it is impossible to say the full scope of liability.

HMG partners are also able to store non-serialized critical parts and accessories, such as a barrel, firing pin, upper or accessory like a key to a gun lock. Background checks are not required by law for these items, but the customer does still fill out the storage contract.

Although I founded HMG in the aftermath of a young friend's suicide, customers store firearms for many reasons including deployment, the sale of a home, when someone is going into a homeless or domestic violence shelter, when there is a foster child in the home, when there is a prohibited person in the home, during the sale of a home (versus having firearms in a moving truck or hotel room), when someone has an extended hospital stay, when a family member dies and the firearms need to be stored during estate settlement, when someone in the home is struggling with addiction, etc.

It is also important to note in the context of liability, many times it's not the gun owner who is struggling. They're practicing self-governance to remove firearms from the home to prevent someone else in the home from having access.

Additionally, Washington and Louisiana have firearms storage



Many times it's not the gun owner who is struggling. They're practicing self governance to remove firearms from the home to prevent someone else in the home from having access.

liability protection laws for safekeeping purposes. There is definitely chatter of more states adopting similar legislation. I recommend any such legislation doesn't not pigeonhole the reasoning as "suicide prevention" but instead recognizes people utilize firearms storage for many reasons. We do not want to assume the gun owner is in crisis, but we want to ensure this service is available to promote personal responsibility in general.

For more info, see <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=9.41.380&pdf=true> (Washington); <https://www.legis.la.gov/Legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=1289513> (Louisiana).

SI: Do we correctly assume that liability if the gun being held is stolen would be the same as if the stolen gun had been left with the dealer for repair or consignment sale?

SA: To clarify: I believe a stolen gun left with a dealer for repair (gunsmithing) is going back to the owner and it is typically (although state laws can vary) not checked to see if it is stolen. (In fact, for gunsmithing, if the firearm is returned the same day, it isn't required to be recorded in the A&D book).

In a consignment sale, however, the FFL is facilitating the transfer of a firearm from the owner to a new owner, and it is common practice for the firearm to be checked before a sale.

The customer-signed contract (accompanied by required ID) attests they are the owner, and are lawfully using the service. The customer-facing contract has a place for remarks about the firearm that include a description and any special features or damage. (Just like if one were to rent a car, it is wise to inspect the car and note prior damage before agreeing to drive it.) This helps reduce liability to the FFL. The customer is aware this information is being recorded in the contract — they're signing off on it.

Firearms in custodial storage are entered into the A&D logbook. Only minimal information is recorded in the bound book: make, model, serial number and owner's contact information. (The nature of the recorded information is disclosed to the customer.)

The proper answer our FFL partners should give if someone comes in asking about a stolen firearm suspected to be in the books is: "We do not share information about our customers. Pound sand. You will need to come back with a court order."

If the state mandates "lost/stolen reporting laws" or if the FFL operates as a Type 2 (pawn shop) and a "pawn check" for stolen firearms is required by law, it's clearly stated in the FFL's customer contract to ensure compliance with state and federal laws. Also, if a customer chooses to consign their firearm or transfer it to a separate household,



non-prohibited third party (Read: *not* a straw purchase), the FFL may verify the firearm is not stolen before transferring it to a *new owner* — this is explained to the customer prior and it is to protect the liability of the gun shop from selling/transferring a stolen firearm to a new owner. An A&D logbook can only be viewed for investigation with a specific court order. FFLs care about protecting the privacy of their customers, and, built into the contract is wording that any information lawfully obtained in a court order will be requested to be sealed.

SI: Are there recommended fees for storing guns and if so, what would the recommended fees be?

SA: HMG recommends our FFL partners charge low-cost storage fees. Some of our partners charge a storage fee, plus a small fee for each additional firearm. For example, \$10 per month, plus \$5 for each additional firearm.

This helps to establish a legal contract with the customer and prevent customers from ditching firearms at the FFL. Nonpayment of monthly (or agreed upon interval — some customers who are going to be away for an extended period, such as a deployment or extended trip, may make other arrangements) fee creates an occasion for the FFL to contact the customer and ask about intent to continue storing the firearms.

There are some donors who have offered to help with scholarship fees, if needed. In the event of nonpayment, the customer can ask for a scholarship in some cases. This helps the FFL to have open communication and know the customer's intent while having the fee covered.

It's important to note FFLs do not ask a person why a firearm is being stored, and having a set fee regardless of circumstance (vs. free storage if a person says they are in crisis) supports

privacy. It would be a breach of privacy to ask someone if they were in crisis for the sake of determining free/discounted storage.

SI: Do you know what have been the longest and the shortest "holds?"

SA: I'm aware of a short-term storage of a week for a residential move and a year-long agreement for someone who was away for a long-term work contract. The contract is written for a month but can be adjusted to meet the customer's needs. In the case where state laws require a waiting period, the minimum hold for a firearm would have to be in compliance. **SI**

Dealers, would you like to see a follow-up or hear from others on how they've partnered with Hold My Guns? Let us know: editor@shootingindustry.com. In the meantime, visit holdmyguns.org for more information.

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2024 *NEW*

PRODUCT SHOWCASE

By Jenna Buckley & Jade Moldae

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MORE 2024 NEW PRODUCTS!

A tried-and-true method to bringing in customers is having products on hand they want to see. Here at the start of 2024, having the latest and greatest products available will drive in-store traffic and interest from your customers!

In Part Two of *Shooting Industry's* 2024 New Product Showcase, we're proud to present some of the newest products available from dozens of firearms, ammunition, optics, holster, knife and accessory companies. It is our hope you take note of these standout products and make it a priority to stop by and see those who will be exhibiting at early-year trade events. (If you missed Part One, see the December 2023 issue.)

From everyone here at the SI team, we wish you a profitable start to the New Business Year!



WALTHER ARMS

(479) 242-8500
waltherarms.com

The **PDP MATCH STEEL FRAME** and **PDP MATCH POLYMER FRAME** models from Walther Arms boast a dynamic performance trigger, performance duty texture, factory optics mounting cut and enhanced magwell. The 9mm Luger pistols have a 5" barrel with 1:9" twist and 5-lb. trigger pull. Two 20-round and one 18-round magazines are included with the steel-frame model, and three 18-round magazines with the polymer model. The steel-frame version, which also features a wrap-around grip panel, has an OAL of 8.37" and weighs 41 oz. The polymer-frame version has an OAL of 8.5" and weighs 26.9 oz.



COLT'S MFG. CO.

(800) 962-2658
colt.com

The **CBX TAC HUNTER** bolt-action hunting rifle from Colt is available in .308 Win and 6.5 Creedmoor cartridges and features 20" and 22" sporter-profile barrels, respectively. Muzzles are 9/16"-24 UNEF threaded and equipped with a thread protector for aftermarket accessories. The smooth bolt-action mechanism has a 60° bolt throw for faster cycling. The trigger pull is adjustable (2.5–5 lbs.) and the receiver is designed to accept Rem700 pattern scope mounts and bases with #8-40 threads, accompanied by Colt blue thread protectors. The two-position tang safety facilitates quick operation while preventing potential accidents, and the more vertical pistol grip enhances ergonomics and trigger control.



5.11 TACTICAL

(866) 451-1726
511tactical.com

COMPETITION INSULATED GLOVES from 5.11 Tactical feature Primaloft Gold 40g insulation (back of hand), TAC-DRY windproof and water-resistant shell, e-suede fingertips, Neoprene knuckle padding, wrist pull-tab/loop with elastic wrist and brushed fleece lining. The gloves are available in black or Kangaroo, in sizes S–2XL.



HAYMAN SAFE CO. INC.

(407) 365-5434
haymansafe.com

Hayman Safe Co.'s **MINUTEMAN** quick-access safe boasts a patented design for discreetly mounting between standard wall studs. It accommodates firearms up to 39" long, as well as handguns and accessories. The Minuteman features a top-lit electronic lock and a biometric lock system upgrade is available; both of which are equipped with a solid deadbolt for rapid access. Long guns are stored in a muzzle-down position, and handguns and other items can also be mounted to an optional foam pad. A luminous tape strip surrounds the recessed keypad to help locate it in the dark. An interior motion-sensor light operates in low- or no-light conditions. Dimensions are 48" H x 14.25" W x 6" D.



500 SUPER BANTAM — TURKEY/OPTIC-READY
(HOLOSUN MICRO DOT COMBO)

O.F. MOSSBERG & SONS

(203) 230-5300
mossberg.com

From Mossberg, **500 AND 835 TURKEY/OPTIC-READY COMBOS** are offered in three gauges across four models. The pump-action shotguns come with extended turkey chokes and barrels fitted with bi-color front fiber optic sights. Designed with receiver cuts that accept low-profile direct mounting of Shield RMSc-pattern sights, each shotgun also comes outfitted with a Holosun HS407K micro dot for straight out-of-the-box hunting convenience. The 500 models are offered in .410 bore or 20 GA with a 20" barrel and six-shot capacity. The 20-GA 500 Super Bantam's stock utilizes a 1" spacer to extend the LOP for better comfort and proper fit for a variety of users. The 20-GA 835 Ulti-Mag model's smoothbore barrels are overbored to 10-GA dimensions, reducing pellet deformation for exceptionally uniform, dense patterns.

PATRIOT BOLT-ACTION RIFLES IN 400 LEGEND are now offered in synthetic or walnut stock models. Patriot rifles have patented LBA adjustable triggers (2–7 lbs.), 20" threaded barrels, spiral fluted bolts, streamlined/checkered bolt handles and four-round box magazines. The 400 Legend cartridge is capable of effectively sending its 215-grain bullet 2,250+ fps out to 200–250 yards. Both 400 Legend Patriot rifles have an 11° match crown and come with a protective cap. Barrel threading is 11/16"-24 TPI. OAL is 40.25".



ACCUCAN SUPPRESSORS

SAVAGE ARMS

(800) 370-0708
savgearms.com

Savage Arms' **ACCUCAN** suppressors include three models: the **AC30**, **AC22** and **AC338**. Highlights of the AC22 include 116 dB with subsonic ammo, 125 dB with sonic, 1/2-28 thread pitch, 7075-T6 aluminum and 6Al-4V titanium, titanium thread mount, build-in self-cleaning carbon cutters and black Type III hard-coat anodized Cerakote finish. The suppressor weighs 3.5 oz., and is suited for .22 LR, .22 Mag. and .17HMR.

Two **HIGH-PERFORMANCE BIPOD** options are now available: M-LOK and sling swivel. These offerings feature cant and swivel capabilities and are designed for a no-slip footprint to maximize performance. They fold up and deploy easily for versatility in the field. The bipods are made of a lightweight polymer blend to make them ideal for hunters and shooters in a wide variety of scenarios.



SUMMIT 17 HMR

VOLQUARTSEN FIREARMS

(712) 792-4238
volquartsen.com

Volquartsen Firearms adds to its straight-pull toggle bolt-action rifle lineup with the **SUMMIT 22 WMR** and **SUMMIT 17 HMR**. These offerings are available in stainless steel and lightweight aluminum configurations, with various barrel and stock options. Configurations will feature a 2.25-lb. trigger pull, 1/2x28 threaded barrel, 0 MOA integral Picatinny rail and a nine-round magazine capacity.



SMITH & WESSON

(800) 331-0852
smith-wesson.com

Smith & Wesson released its latest Spec Series Kit with the **PERFORMANCE CENTER M&P9 METAL M2.0**. Upgraded features integrated into this Spec Series pistol include a built-in Faxon compensator to mitigate felt recoil and muzzle rise; custom lightening cuts in the slide to reduce weight and improve reliability while being compensated; an enhanced sear for a lighter, crisp trigger let-off; suppressor height sights; and an OD Green Cerakote finish. The PC M&P9 Metal M2.0 Spec Series ships in a custom hard case and includes two 23-round magazines, two 17-round magazines, C.O.R.E plate system for mounting optics, a karambit-style knife and custom M&P Spec Series challenge coin.



FN AMERICA

(703) 288-3500
fnamerica.com

FN America's **FN DFNS** (SS200) 5.7x28mm personal defense ammunition delivers safe, reliable performance. FN DFNS is capable of achieving an average of approximately 2,067 fps while delivering approximately 286 ft-lbs of energy from the muzzle. The unique 30-grain jacketed hollow point bullet contains a copper-tin powdered core designed to expend energy quickly and efficiently while cycling reliably.

The **FN GUNR** (SS201) 5.7x28mm training round is a 40-grain full metal jacketed cartridge featuring high-quality brass construction with boxer primer and is designed to achieve an average of 1,870 fps. The FN GUNR delivers extremely low felt recoil, improved accuracy at extended ranges and reliable feeding across all 5.7-chambered firearms.



HODGDON POWDER COMPANY

(913) 362-9455
hodgdonpowderco.com

The **2024 HODGDON ANNUAL MANUAL**, the 21st annual edition, is now available from Hodgdon Powder Co. The manual features data for Hodgdon, Accurate Powder, IMR, Ramshot and Winchester Smokeless Propellants. In total, more than 6,000 loads are represented in this title, with updates for more than 70 rifle and pistol cartridges and more than 1,000 shotshell loads. It also offers authoritative articles by industry writers.

XS SIGHTS

(888) 744-4880
xssights.com

XS Sights' photoluminescent **STANDARD DOT VENT RIB SHOTGUN BEADS** for waterfowl and turkey hunting are bright, durable and an easy DIY install. The universal fit design utilizes a brass post and friction taper lock that will securely hold the bead on the barrel. Available with a green or orange photoluminescent ember glow dot, the shotgun bead is brighter than similar-sized fiber optic sights in daylight conditions and glows in low light for enhanced visibility. The sights have a bead diameter of 0.165" and overall height of 0.165". Thread options include: 5-40, 3-56, 6-48, M3x.5 and M2.5x.45. Initial fits are for Benelli, Beretta, Browning, CZ, Mossberg, Remington and Stoeger vent rib shotguns.



CROSSBREED HOLSTERS

(888) 732-5011
crossbreedholsters.com

The **CONFIDANT 2.0 MULTI-FIT MAG CARRIER** from CrossBreed is designed to accommodate a broad range of single- and double-stack pistol magazine sizes. It fits most personal-defense pistol magazines on the market intended for micro-compacts through to full-frame models. Enhanced structural stability is achieved by integrating the belt clip into the carrier panel for less movement during magazine insertion and retrieval. With its reduced profile, the Confidant 2.0 provides a more discreet and comfortable carry experience in OWB or IWB configuration.



SK GUNS

(844) 475-4867
skguns.com

SK Guns has partnered with Springfield Armory to release the limited edition **EARLY ITALIAN RENAISSANCE SERIES**. This release includes four exquisite firearms, each paying tribute to the masterpieces of four renowned artists from the early Renaissance period: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael and Andrea del Sarto. With a total of 1,000 units available in 2024, collectors and firearm enthusiasts will have the opportunity to own these Springfield Armory Engraver Model 1911s built off the Garrison. Each edition features stunning depictions of the artist's most significant works, carefully crafted onto the 1911 slide.



BERETTA

(800) 237-3882
beretta.com



687 SILVER PIGEON V

The Beretta **PB SELECTION 92FS FUSION OCP** pays tribute to the military and L.E. agencies using the 92FS, allowing this limited series to be a combination of modern industrial techniques and innovative design applications. Hand fitted and hand polished by Beretta master gunsmiths, it guarantees enhanced performance in terms of accuracy and endurance. Comes packaged with two magazines, a luxury cleaning kit, a special tool for grip screws, and a handcrafted case carefully refined by our craftsmen.

The **MANURHIN MR73 SERIES OF REVOLVERS** was developed specifically for the requirements of the French Gendarmerie and special service units of the French police and military. This limited-edition collection piece features special engravings to celebrate its 50th anniversary and comes enclosed in a premium case with a certificate of authenticity and a spare 9mm cylinder with four moon clips included.

The **687 SILVER PIGEON V** is characterized by a new look together with a superior wood grade. The fine engravings are made using state-of-the-art, five-axis laser technology and are embellished by a special sparkle in the bas-relief areas. Available in Hunting or Sporting versions, and, for the first time, in the Silver Pigeon family the option of the B-Fast adjustable comb. Three stock drop options 35/55, 38/60, and Vittoria are also available along with left-handed stock options.

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STURM, RUGER & CO.

(336) 949-5200
ruger.com

In honor of the company's 75th anniversary, four commemorative models representing Ruger's three major manufacturing facilities. From the Prescott, Ariz. facility is a **MARK IV STANDARD 75TH ANNIVERSARY MODEL**. Featuring a fully adjustable rear sight, an undercut Patridge front sight and a heavy, tapered barrel, this pistol balances well in the hand and retains the classic styling of the iconic pistol that launched the company in 1949. Additional details include a 75th anniversary logo engraving on both the receiver and the bolt, and handsome, fully checkered grip panels. The Newport, N.H., facility offers two models of the timeless **10/22 RIMFIRE CARBINE**. Each model features a stainless steel barrel, silver-finished receiver, polished bolt engraved with the 75th anniversary logo, a match-sanded butt pad and front and rear sling swivels. Model 31275 has a traditionally stained and checkered hardwood stock, while Model 41275 has an unstained hardwood stock adorned with striking, dark checkering. Mayodan, N.C., the location of Ruger's newest manufacturing facility, offers a unique **LCP MAX**. The LCP MAX is a double-stack, 10-round version of the enormously successful LCP. The anniversary model of the LCP MAX features a stainless steel slide adorned with an engraved 75th anniversary logo and a silver-anodized aluminum trigger.

The Super Redhawk line of revolvers from Ruger is now available in **.22 HORNET**, is ideal for long-range handgun varmint hunters. This new model features a Hogue Tamer Monogrip, a 9.5" cold hammer-forged barrel with a replaceable HiViz green insert front sight and an adjustable rear sight. The triple-locking cylinder is locked into the frame at the front, rear and bottom for more positive alignment and dependable operation shot after shot. The Super Redhawk has an OAL of 15", eight-round capacity and weighs 66 oz.



SWAMPFOX OPTICS

(720) 389-6719
swampfoxoptics.com

Swampfox Optics debuts a trio of second-generation dot sights: the **SENTINEL II**, **LIBERTY II** and **JUSTICE II**. Built on the success of their predecessors, the sights deliver improved functionality, durability and shooter versatility. The redesigned optic bodies constructed from 7075 aluminum with reinforced hoods and recessed lenses offer better protection against surface racking and the elements. Enlarged windows provide a wider field of view for quick target acquisition of red or green illuminated reticles. All of the three dot sights are equipped with Shake N' Wake auto on/off technology for extended battery life and anytime readiness. The Sentinel II is designed for EDC use, the Liberty II is built atop an RMR footprint and the Justice II is ideal for users looking for an edge in competitions.



ARMASIGHT

JOCKEY 640

(888) 504-2762
armasight.com

The **JOCKEY 640** compact thermal imaging riflescope clips-on easily in front of an existing 1-6x day scope with no additional zeroing required and works flawlessly with most optics under 5x magnification. The Jockey's compact and lightweight design keeps a .223/.556, rimfire, airgun or crossbow nimble and responsive. Its suite of features includes video and image capturing, USB video stream and USB-C interface for viewing recordings and photos on external devices such as computers or televisions. The Jockey 640 offers multiple color palettes, intuitive three-button controls, a quick detach mount and long battery life.

The **SIDEKICK 640** is the smallest fully multi-functional 12-micron 640 thermal imaging monocular on the market. It boasts a fast 60Hz frame rate for smooth operation and outstanding visual acuity. Weighing under 384 grams, the Sidekick can be used as a handheld mini-monocular or can be headset/helmet mounted utilizing the built-in mini-rail for hands-free operation. The high definition 1024x768 OLED display provides a crisp image, with iconography providing key information. The Sidekick utilizes simplified three-button controls for easy manipulation in the field and offers one-touch in-unit video recording.



MAGTECH AMMUNITION

(763) 235-4000
magtechammunition.com

Magtech **STEEL CASE 9MM** ammunition is produced completely in-house on proprietary machinery using the same boxer primers, powder and projectiles loaded in its standard brass case 9mm. The steel cases are zinc-plated and polished to an extremely high standard, eliminating the need for problematic lacquers, polymer coatings and other case treatments that often result in reduced performance. Magtech Steel Case 9mm is currently available with 115-grain FMJ projectiles.



PRO-GARD PRODUCTS

(800) 480-6680
pro-gard.com

The **HANDGUN LOCKER** from Pro-gard is constructed from durable 14-gauge steel and includes an anti-prying lip, offering peace of mind for L.E. professionals. Three access options — fingerprint detection, keypad entry and key override — ensure L.E. agencies have the flexibility and reliability needed. The Handgun Locker is capable of storing up to 100 fingerprints, allowing seamless access for authorized personnel. The Handgun Locker is compact, designed to fit seamlessly under most vehicle seats or mounted directly to a flat surface.

DARK STORM INDUSTRIES

(800) 963-7700
dark-storm.com

Dark Storm Industries has unveiled the **DS-15 MFR (MODERN FIGHTING RIFLE)**. The DS-15 MFR boasts full ambidextrous controls for enhanced user-friendly operation, including safety, charging handle, magazine release and bolt catch/release mechanisms. Addressing potential operational failures, Dark Storm Industries included a pinned micro gas block, captive E-clip for the ejection port rod and handguard with chainlink axial retention and dual indexing dowel pins. The enhanced bolt carrier group features dual ejectors, the latest MIL-PRF-32711 heat treatment and DLC coating. The MFR includes Dark Storm's new "Where's the Flash" (WTF) muzzle device, a four-prong flash hider.



OUTDOOR EDGE

(888) 249-6942
outdooredge.com

Outdoor Edge launches its Advanced Carry line with the debut of the **RAZOR VX SERIES**, featuring the company's RazorSafe system. Razor VX models have an assisted-opening mechanism for one-hand operation. The spring-assist open knives can be opened rapidly by simply pushing the thumb stud or flipper. The lineup includes seven unique models — VX2, VX4 and VX5 — and two versions of the VX1 and VX3, each in either stainless steel or black oxide. Each features a 3" blade length, robust liner lock, ambidextrous operation with a reversible pocket clip for left or right carry and Japanese 420J2 stainless blades in either a stainless or black oxide finish. The knives range in length from 7.3" to 7.5" and weigh between 3.2 and 3.7 oz.

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SPRINGFIELD ARMOY

(800) 680-6866
springfield-armory.com

Springfield Armory announces the Hellion is now available in **THREE NEW COLOR OPTIONS**: gray, Desert FDE and OD Green. The "bullpup" design of the Hellion offers a fresh take on 5.56mm semi-automatic rifles by positioning the action behind the trigger, resulting in a compact 28.25" length while still maintaining a 16" barrel. The Hellion is equipped with ambidextrous controls and a reversible ejection system.



NEBO

(800) 255-6061
nebo.acgbrands.com

NEBO's **RAMBLER 200** portable power station provides 200 watts of power with a 400-watt surge and AC charging options for various devices, including wired and wireless USB. It is strong enough to power a laptop or smartphone, and can be used outdoors to power a lantern, headlamp, flashlight, etc. The Rambler 200 is built with a rugged, impact-resistant body and can charge up to six devices at once. An integrated floodlight makes it an essential emergency backup light when the power is out, and it can even be recharged with a separately sold solar panel.



GUN TOTE'N MAMAS

(847) 446-0700
gtmoriginal.com

The **GTM-116** waist sling can be worn on the waist or as a crossbody sling. Designed for use on either the left or right side, the bag has a light pebble surface texture crafted from American cowhide. It fits up to a 50" waist fully extended with extender, and down to a 24" waist fully retracted without the extender. The gun compartment measures 7.25"W x 5.5"H x 1" D (gun footprint area of 6.5"W x 4.75" H). It provides side and angled draw capability, and the special padding prevents imprinting. The GTM-116 is available in black, lavender (pictured) and Distressed Buffalo.

HAWKE OPTICS

(877) 429-5347
us.hawkeoptics.com

The Hawke **VANTAGE 30 WA 4-12X42 IR - 6.5 CREEDMOOR MARKSMAN SCOPE** is built on a 30mm main tube and features a wide angled optical system. The scope has 11 layers of multi-coating for optimal clarity, durability and brightness and 3.5" of eye relief. The exposed turrets with 1/4 MOA adjustment settings let shooters make quick adjustments. The Bullet Drop Compensating (BDC) 6.5 Creedmoor Marksman reticle was designed specifically for one of the most popular calibers in the gun world. The multi-level red/green illuminated, glass-etched reticle's aim points make precision shooting simple and easy to comprehend with a center crosshair calibrated for accuracy from 0 to 200 yards with additional holdovers at 100-yard increments out to 700 yards.



CRKT

(800) 891-3100
crkt.com

Part of CRKT's Forged by War initiative, the **CLEVER GIRL** is a tactical, fixed-blade knife featuring a powerful, upswept 4.6" blade crafted with high-performance SK-5 steel and Veff serrations for superior slicing action. The Clever Girl boasts a marbled G10 handle for exceptional grip and all-weather functionality and a durable thermoplastic sheath with multiple mounting options. OAL is 10.13" and it weighs 6.3 oz.





PRIME ARCHERY

(810) 392-8431
g5prime.com

Prime Archery, by G5 Outdoors, introduces the 2024 **PRIME RVX** lineup of bows. Models are available in 32", 34" and 36" axle-to-axle configurations, and Quik Tune technology allows the cam to be shifted precisely without pulling the axle. The RVX let off is adjustable from 85% to 75%, and the draw length can be adjusted shorter by 0.25". Swerve Technology controls riser torque and improves aiming and stability through the entire shooting cycle. A Picatinny rail allows for easy mounting of a bow sight, and the QAD's dovetail provides additional mounting options. Several color choices are offered including Recon Grey, Morel, Ridge Rock, black, Asio Camo, SoloHnr Camo, Firstlite Specter and more.

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MUZLSTIK.COM



ROSSI USA

(229) 515-8707
rossiusa.com

Built on the same action as the Rossi Brawler pistol, the single-shot **SURVIVAL RIFLE** is a 16" carbine with a hammer-forged barrel that accepts either .45 Colt or up to 3" .410 bore shotshells. The single-action trigger is crisp and breaks to the rear with minimal stacking. The Survival Rifle features a polymer stock capable of holding up to four additional rounds. It also has takedown capabilities, fitting inside a backpack or rucksack for easy transportation.

PULSAR

(817) 761-1771
pulsarnv.com

Pulsar's **THERMION 2 LRF XL50** thermal imaging riflescope boasts exceptional HD image quality and powerful sensor capabilities, making it ideal for long-distance shooters and wide-field observations. The high-definition sensor maintains exceptional image detail across the entire magnification range, with the option to magnify the optic in 2x increments or in a smooth, continuous motion, depending on the situation. The compact built-in LRF, with a range of up to 875 yards, is integrated into the scope's design, ensuring shooting accuracy at any distance. Using the Stream Vision Ballistics app, users can upload various ballistic profiles directly into the Thermion's memory.



LANGDON TACTICAL TECHNOLOGY

(571) 385-2979
langdontactical.com

The **BERETTA TOMCAT BY LTT** begins as a suppressor-ready Beretta 3032 Tomcat chambered in .32 ACP. Enhancements include the LTT RDO cut with a modified RMSc footprint to fit the Hologun 407/507k and EPS optics, as well as the SIGRomeo, SIGRomeo Zero, Shield RMSc and other RMSc footprint optics. Additionally, engineers carry bevel the back of the slide to mitigate the sharp edges that often result in "slide bite." A basic Langdon Tactical trigger job improves the smoothness and consistency of the trigger pull.



P322-COMP

SIG SAUER

(603) 610-3000
sigsauer.com

The SIG SAUER **P322-COMP** is a competition-ready .22 LR rimfire pistol with 25- and 20-round capacity, a threaded barrel equipped with a two-port compensator and a factory-installed ROMOEZero Elite Red Dot optic. The polymer grip module features an extended magazine catch, adjustable trigger shoe, sport takedown lever, 1913 rail and integrated mag well. The SAO hammer-fired action is completely enclosed in a competition alloy slide with a high-visibility fiber-optic front sight and front, rear and top cocking serrations. The pistol ships with one 20-round magazine and one 25-round magazine.

SIG SAUER Electro-Optics' **TANGO-DMR** family of riflescopes is available in 5-30x56mm and 3-18x44mm magnification with an illuminated first focal plane MRAD or MOA milling 2.0 reticle and 6x magnification range featuring SIG SAUER HDX glass. All TANGO-DMR riflescopes feature an ultralight design; a multi-stop, zero stop multi-lock elevation dial; locking illumination control; a low profile, capped windage dial; removable throw lever; 34mm maintube; and are compatible with SIG SAUER Electro-Optics Alpha scope rings.

ETS GROUP

(855) 887-5452
etsgroup.us

The ETS Group introduces the **OMEGA MAGAZINE FOR THE GLOCK 17**, offering shooters the superior strength, function and durability of steel, while preserving the visibility, reduced weight and impact resistance of ETS polymer. The steel frame of Omega enables it to function like a factory mag as it reduces friction, increases stiffness and maintains key tolerances for feed reliability. Feature highlights include military-grade Teflon-infused coating, ergonomic floorplate design, extreme impact resistance and 50% less weight than an all-steel magazine. Models for Smith & Wesson, SIG SAUER and Springfield Armory will follow throughout 2024.



SIGHTRON

(919) 562-3000
sightron.com

The **S-TAC 1-6X24 AR1** from SIGHTRON boasts 13 meticulously crafted Japanese optical glass lenses with multi-coating technology. The new throw lever design allows the user reposition the "Fin" to one of 16 positions on the magnification dial. The S-TAC AR1 reticle is purpose-built for MSRs chambered in .223 and 5.56mm. The illuminated halo helps with fast target acquisition at close range while the illuminated center dot ensures accurate mid-range target placement. Non-illuminated, drop bars indicate holdovers between 300-600 yards. The ExacTrack erector tube system delivers consistent, reliable and repeatable adjustments. The scope is crafted from aircraft-grade aluminum, weighs only 22.4 oz., meets IPX7 waterproof standards and is nitrogen-charged.

TRUE

(800) 255-6061
true.acgbrands.com

TRUE's **MAAR CLEAVER FLIPPER KNIFE** sports a 3.5" folding cleaver blade made from D2 steel finished in a black oxide stone wash. One-handed operation is simple, safe and quick. It's built with a ball-bearing pivot system and locked into the open position with a liner lock. Added features include a G10 handle, deep-carry pocket clip and lanyard hole. The MAAR Cleaver Flipper Knife measures 9" overall (5.5" folded) and weighs 8 oz.





DESANTIS HOLSTERS

(631) 841-6300
desantisholster.com

The #220 MEAN STREAK IWB Kydex holster from DeSantis is built from extremely durable 0.080" grey Kydex. It's user-adjustable for height and cant and features an integral sweat guard and "claw." All of the edges have been meticulously hand-polished. It's constructed using precision CNC tooling, and is red dot compatible. Left- and right-hand versions for SIG, GLOCK, Springfield and other popular auto-loading pistols are available.



DICKINSON ARMS

(805) 978-8565
dickinsonarms.com

The ADAM SERIES of highly detailed 1911 pistols from Dickinson Arms includes both a standard line and a premium line, with beautiful detail and custom feel out of the box. ADAM Series pistols are available in 9mm and .45 ACP. The standard model shares details across the line, with a forged steel barrel, slide and frame. The 9x19mm Parabellum models have a 4.37" barrel, an OAL of 7.87" and nine-round capacity. The .45 ACP models have a 5" barrel length, an OAL of 8.5" and seven-round capacity. The standard models are available in a blued finish or a satin chrome finish, both with a synthetic grip. Premium models come in a wide range of specialized finishes including Fireball, Rainbow and American Eagle.



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SAKO 90 HUNTER

SAKO LTD.

(301) 283-2191
sako.global

The SAKO 90 SERIES features a collection of rifles to meet a variety of pursuits. The SAKO 90 HUNTER features smooth bolt operation and walnut stock paired with a blued receiver and barrel continue to fulfil the needs of hunters who are looking for a rifle with an elegant stock for the ultimate in hunting versatility. The SAKO 90 ADVENTURE's light weight and ultimate weather resistance allows the hunter to climb higher, trek further and stay longer in even the most unfavorable weather conditions. The SAKO 90 QUEST is designed for the backcountry hunter who is looking for a versatile hunting rifle with high-level adjustability and ergonomics. Designed for mountain hunts, the SAKO 90 PEAK is built on the Carbonlight platform — weighing approximately 5.7 lbs. The SAKO 90 VARMINT features a free-floating heavy stainless steel barrel, which has fluting to allow heat to dissipate. Continuing the legacy of elegant walnut-stocked hunting rifles, the SAKO 90 BAVARIAN was designed for tree-stand hunting.



EXTAR USA

(928) 583-9265
extarusa.com

Extar USA has evolved the popular EP9 platform into a carbine with its EP9 CARBINE. The EP9 Carbine is fed using GLOCK-pattern magazines, so the same magazine and ammunition can function in a pistol and a rifle. Features include: 9x19 Luger caliber, 16.25" barrel length, black nitride bolt and barrel finish, single-stage trigger, side-charging reciprocating handle and 33-round capacity. The EP9 Carbine has an OAL of 35" (31.25" collapsed), overall height of 7.9" and it weighs 5 lbs., 2 oz.



BARRETT FIREARMS

(615) 896-2938
barrett.net

Barrett Firearms' **MRADLR** is an extreme long-range system with user-changeable barrels and calibers. Features of the system include an electroless nickel-plated bolt head for reduced wear, maintenance and added corrosion resistance. The M-LOK compatible modular upper receiver features a continuous integral top rail. Its 60° bolt throw offers faster and more efficient cycling, and the 36" match-grade single point cut stainless steel barrel comes with a three-port muzzle brake (it is also compatible with the QDL muzzle brake). The adjustable single-stage trigger module can be removed without tools, and the fixed stock has an oversized recoil pad with push-button height adjustment and LOP, as well as a height adjustable locking polymer cheek piece. OAL is 62" and it weighs 23 lbs.



MATRIX

ASP INC.

(800) 236-6243
asp-usa.com

From ASP, the **MATRIX** tactical flashlight, a tough, polymer-bodied law enforcement duty light, puts out 650 lumens, with a secondary low level of 15 lumens. The Matrix is powered by a rechargeable 18650 lithium-ion battery, and is also Dual Fuel capable. The **SENTRY** is a polymer-bodied duty model as well. It features a 700 lumen high setting and a 15 lumen low setting. It ships with two CR123A disposable batteries and can be upgraded to rechargeable capability with purchase of an optional ASP 18650 cell.

The **SPORT DEFENDER OC** (pepper spray) device is a polymer-bodied unit with a geometric, faceted gripping surface. It's held and operated in a natural, defensive posture with a horizontal orientation. When needed, a thumb safety is disengaged, and a quick press of the actuator disperses a cone-shaped cloud of the potent irritant. Available in two sizes, the Sport accepts the same replaceable pepper spray aerosol inserts as all other Defender model. One pepper spray insert is included, and test/practice inserts are available separately.



HYDRA WEAPONRY

(855) 493-7221
hydraweaponry.com

From Hydra Weaponry, the **MULTI CALIBER MODULAR HYDRA 5.56MM AR** includes the Hydra modular lower receiver with a 5.56mm AR magwell, an AR magazine and the Hydra Quick Change Barrel Upper Receiver (QCB-D). The rifle also sports a 5.56mm 1:7" twist barrel with a low-profile gas block, Hydra modified bolt carrier, Hydra D-fender D-ring for increased reliability and a B5 Systems Bravo stock on a six-position tube and a Type 22 pistol grip.



CARACAL USA

(208) 323-8727
caracalusa.com

From Caracal USA, the **ENHANCED F** 9mm striker-fired pistol offers users snag-free carry in a low-profile design with superior ergonomics. Combined with the Quick-Sight System (front and rear sights on a single focal plane), the Enhanced F achieves target acquisition incredibly fast, even on second shots. All metal parts are QPQ nitride with an enclosed post-oxidizing surface treatment for increased durability and protection against wear and corrosion. Enhanced F barrels are rated for +P ammo. Rear slide serrations provide a positive grip space for single-hand racking. The pistol accepts accessories, lasers and lights on the 1913 Picatinny rail. The Enhanced F pistol is available in a variety of configurations, including a threaded barrel for a suppressor.

NORTHERN PRECISION CUSTOM SWAGED BULLETS

(315) 955-8679
npccustombullets.com

Northern Precision now offers **.228 BULLETS** for the 22 Savage High Power (Model 99 Savage). The rounds are made from dawn 6mm jackets in custom weights ranging from 50 to 80 grains in spitzer that can also be made in bonded core. The .228 rounds are available in boxes of 50 (non-bonded) and 25 (bonded core).

Custom bullets are available for **350 LEGEND** and **360 BUCKHAMMER** in .355 and .358 up to 250 grains in round nose as well as spitzer for single shot and bolt guns. The thin-jacket bullet expands well on deer-sized game and a variety of weights can be ordered as well as the option to be bonded. Bullets for straight-wall cartridges are also made in .375, .429 and .458 in flat tip, round nose and spitzer.



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360 BUCKHAMMER

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MAGPUL INDUSTRIES CORP.

(877) 462-4785
magpul.com

The **MOE X-22** stock from Magpul is for those looking for a lightweight, budget-friendly upgrade for a Ruger 10/22-pattern rifle. Features include two M-LOK slots at the six o'clock position, light weight (approx. 19 oz.), 13.5" LOP, ergonomic, non-slip polymer butt pad with angled toe, integral sling loops (compatible with Uncle Mike's locking sling swivels) on toe and forend and Magpul's TSP texture on the pistol grip. The MOE X-22 ships with two interchangeable barrel trays of different diameters to support both factory pencil and bull-barrel profiles.

HSM AMMUNITION

(406) 777-2106
hsmammunition.com

HSM Ammunition has added the **6MM ADVANCE RIFLE CARTRIDGE (ARC)** caliber to its lineup. Key features of the 6mm ARC cartridge include precision engineering, optimized ballistics that deliver a flat trajectory and excellent downrange energy and versatility in shooting applications. The 6mm ARC cartridge is available in three popular rifle lines: Trophy Gold — 95-grain Berger VLD, 2,600 fps.; Tipping Point 2 — 95-grain Hor. SST, 2,554 fps; and Varmint — 75-grain Hor. V-Max, 2,950 fps.



RKS0627

ROCKY BOOTS

(866) 442-4908
rockyboots.com

Rocky Boots introduces two new styles to its Lynx collection. Ideal for hunting or outdoor activities, Rocky Lynx boots feature waterproof full-grain leather and Cordura uppers that will resist tears. Rocky recycled Vapor Pass waterproofing keeps moisture out. Featuring two 8" boots with different insulation packages, the Lynx includes: the **RKS0627**, sporting a Mossy Oak Country DNA upper and 1,000 grams of 3M Thinsulate Insulation; and the **RKS0628**, with a Realtree EXCAPE upper and 400 Grams of 3M Thinsulate Insulation.

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2024 **NEW** PRODUCT SHOWCASE



KIRKPATRICK LEATHER HOLSTERS

(956) 723-6893
kirkpatrickleather.com

The **BIG JAKE HOLSTER** from Kirkpatrick Leather Holsters was meticulously reimagined for the Henry Big Boy revolver. It is made from the finest American leather, and has 24 bullet loops, a solid square buckle and a latigo hammer tie-down.

FALCO HOLSTERS

(800) 490-7147
falcoholsters.com

Falco Holsters introduces **ROYAL PURPLE** and **TEAL BLUE** premium leather to its selection of products. Customers can choose from a variety of holster customization options including leather, stitching and edge colors; embossing; laser engraving; carry style; belt loop widths; cant angle; sweat guard height; and lining material. Falco Holsters offers fits for over 4,000 different firearms.



INDUSTRY LINK

Continued from p. 66

SHOOT UNITED LAUNCHES RIMFIRE EDUCATIONAL VIDEO SERIES

Shoot United launches the sixth installment of its “Take Your Shot” educational video series. The latest series focuses on rimfire ammunition, firearms, and shooting competitions. It is hosted by Wesley Stotts of Savage Arms and Travis Ishida of National Rifle League 22 (NRL22).



“Rimfire is one of the most popular starting points for people who are just learning to shoot,” said Jason Gilbertson, Shoot United director of marketing. “The content is valuable for people who are ready to start plinking at a shooting range, or interested in rimfire competitions.”

The Rimfire Take Your Shot series includes information on the following: safety; history of rimfire ammunition; differences between rimfire and centerfire ammunition; popular rimfire cartridges; rimfire firearms; and rimfire shooting competitions.

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

SK GIVES BACK INITIATIVE REACHES \$750,000

SK Guns has contributed \$750,000 to various organizations through its initiative — SK Gives Back.

“Looking back three years after we started SK Gives Back, it has been amazing to see the impact these programs have had in their communities,” said Simon Khiabani, owner and founder of SK Guns. “We have the privilege of partnering with amazing organizations dedicated to the betterment of the shooting sports, military, veteran and firearm

communities. We’re honored to work with each group, and are excited to expand this initiative in the future.”

SK Gives Back was created in 2020, with the goal of giving back to those in need both locally and nationally by donating firearms and financially to organizations committed to enhancing personal growth and development opportunities. Since its inception, the program has made a significant impact by raising \$750,000 through its various initiatives. SK Gives Back currently supports organizations that support shooting sports as a whole, firearm safety, hunter education and conservation efforts.



As SK Guns continues to grow and innovate as a leading limited-edition manufacturer of custom firearms, SK Gives Back continues to represent their unwavering commitment to the shooting sports, military, veteran and firearm communities.

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

USACTL RELEASES 2023 IMPACT REPORT

The USA Clay Target League (USACTL) has released its 2023 Annual Impact Report. This yearly report presents the continued efforts of the League to provide clay target shooting as a safe and fun school-sponsored activity to schools and students nationwide.

“The League continues to grow beyond all expectations,” said John Nelson, USACTL president. “Participation continues to set records each year, and the League is poised to continue its success into 2024.”

With just under 50,000 participating athletes in 2023, the 501(c)(3) non-profit USA Clay Target League is the largest youth clay target shooting sport program

in the nation. The League offers trap, skeet, sporting clays and 5-stand leagues to secondary and postsecondary schools across the country.

Highlights of the 2023 Annual Impact Report include:

- 198 new teams added in 2023
- Record 49,337 registered student athletes
- More than 13,000 new athletes in 2023
- Over \$17 million in conservation dollars raised by League athletes through Pittman-Robertson excise taxes since 2020.

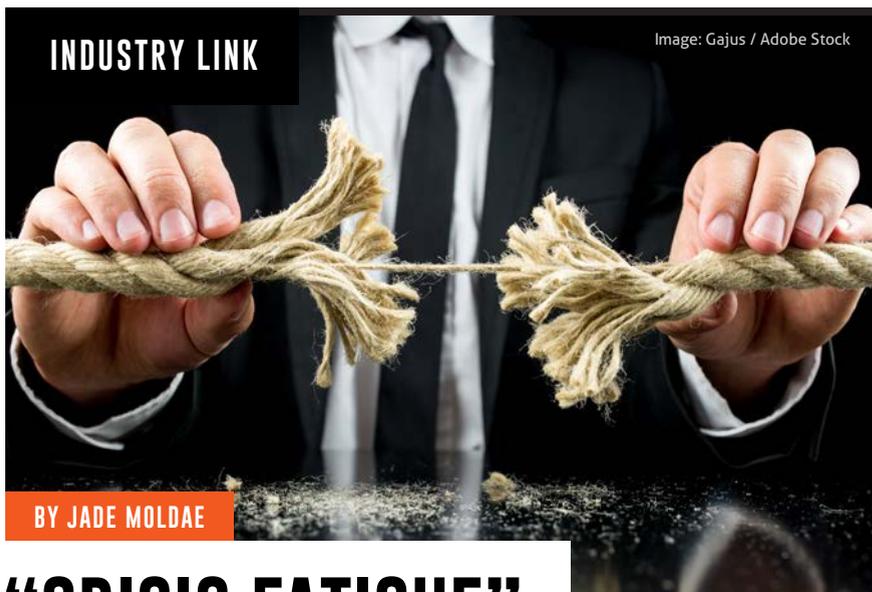
“Coaches, parents, schools and shooting ranges are the heroes that make participation in the League a safe and fun activity for student athletes,” Nelson said. “Students are developing themselves and their teammates into



USACTL's participation growth has ballooned from under 400 in 2010 to nearly 50,000 in 2023.

respectful, responsible young adults while developing relationships that will extend far beyond the shooting range.”

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



BY JADE MOLDAE

“CRISIS FATIGUE” IMPACTING 2024 PLANS

Across each of *Shooting Industry’s* 2024 New Business Year editions — the Dec. 2023 and Jan. 2024 issues — one overarching theme has risen to the surface: uncertainty is putting a crimp in long-term planning.

In the December issue, Fort Thompson Sporting Goods Owner Tom Denniston observed retailers and consumers alike are suffering from “crisis fatigue.” This succinctly sums up what has been a chaotic period for everyone over nearly four years — and has made long-term planning exceedingly difficult.

Today, gauging how long a wave of demand is going to last is anything but straightforward. Dealers have to tread a fine line: investing in too much inventory presents just as much a risk as not having it in the first place.

“A couple of times I bought too much,” Denniston recalled. “If you get too much stuff bought and everybody catches up, the price goes down, and you’re stuck with inventory you paid too much for.”

Fortunately, Denniston has learned from his experiences and takes a more balanced approach to buying.

“I’m not going crazy buying stuff,” he said. “We can react quickly to [a surge] versus Academy and Bass Pro. We can react to it as far as getting stuff through distributors and direct. ... We’re hanging neutral.”

On the other hand, however, not having enough inventory presents its own set of challenges. An experienced voice in the industry, Hyatt Guns Owner Larry Hyatt lent his expertise on what dealers need to have in 2024.

“Stores better have a good selection because nobody wants to drive to a physical store if they don’t have products,” he shared.

In an election year — which will likely bring its own chaos — having what Hyatt dubs “social unrest” inventory on hand isn’t a bad idea either.

“We have what we call ‘social unrest’ inventory. You better have it, because your law enforcement needs it, and your citizens need it. So, you have to have some ammunition stocked up,” he said.

There will be a lot involved in “getting it right” in 2024. It’s certainly a balancing act, but traits that have served business owners in the past will certainly help here in 2024 — some savvy and ingenuity, mixed with luck and a healthy dose of grit, represent a firm foundation.

CONSUMERS ARE VERY MUCH “STILL WITH US”

In their annual New Business Year preview story, Nancy Bacon and Rob Southwick closed with the following: “The consumer is still standing by our side, and it’s up to us to manage capacity and inventories accordingly.”

The customer is indeed still with

us — the onus is on all of us to draw them in with innovative products and solutions to meet their self-defense needs.

NICS trends from the first 11 months of 2023 and Black Friday, in particular, reveal there is still substantial interest from consumers. As of Nov. 30, 2023, there were 14,072,221 NSSF-adjusted NICS background checks (a 4.1% decrease from 2022). According to NSSF, while Black Friday week 2023 was down 4.3% compared to 2022, “Black Friday” alone resulted in a record 214,913 (unadjusted) checks.

“These figures tell us that there is a continued strong appetite for lawful firearm ownership by law-abiding Americans and firearm manufacturers across the country continue to deliver the quality firearms our customers have come to expect,” observed Joe Bartozzi, president and CEO of NSSF.

“

Some savvy and ingenuity, mixed with luck and a healthy dose of grit, represent a firm foundation.

In other welcome news, an NBC poll revealed more than half of American voters (52%) say they or someone in their household owns a firearm. According to NBC, this represents the highest share of those either owning a firearm or living with someone with one since it began polling this question in 1999. Stunningly, this figure has jumped 10% in just 10 years.

We’ll explore the implications of these latest figures — as well as reviewing the full 2023 NICS figures — in next month’s issue.

If you have a new year prediction to share, I’d love to hear from you: editor@shootingindustry.com. In the meantime, I wish you and your team a profitable start to the 2024 New Business Year.

Continued on p. 65

Celebrating 75 Years of Rugged, Reliable Firearms®



In 2024, Ruger proudly celebrates 75 years of manufacturing rugged, reliable firearms. To commemorate this occasion, Ruger is proud to announce four 75th Anniversary Models, a Mark IV™ pistol, two different 10/22® rifles and an LCP® MAX, each representative of Ruger's storied past and bright future. These commemorative models are inspired by iconic Ruger products, and represent each of our three major manufacturing facilities.



The acquisition, ownership, possession and use of firearms are heavily regulated. Some models may not be legally available in your state or locale. Whatever your purpose for lawfully acquiring a firearm – know the law, get trained and shoot safely.





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