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SHOOTING INDUSTRY

THE INDUSTRY'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE — EST. 1955



\$5 | APRIL 2025

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SHOOTING SEGMENT

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at first
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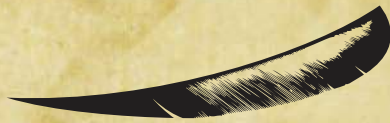
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ROST MARTIN: CARVING A NICHE

CONTENT SPONSORED BY ROST MARTIN

AS a new company making its debut at SHOT Show 2024, Rost Martin made a strong first impression with attendees who stopped by to handle its inaugural offering: the RM1C. Boasting a standout trigger and exceptional ergonomics, the RM1C generated significant interest from buyers.

Reid Durbin, owner of Ray's Sporting Goods in Dallas, captured the early sentiment well: "Launching a new item into the firearms industry is very tough, and it's hard to get your foot in the door. Rost Martin didn't just get their foot in the door — they kicked it open."

According to Chris Toomer, Rost Martin co-founder and CEO, the company prides itself on having a strong out-of-the-box trigger to set itself apart.

"At dealer shows, people will pick up one of our guns and look at it, feel it and dry-fire it — which gives them the 'light-bulb moment' of what makes us different," he said.

Today, Rost Martin is building on its early success, furthering its foothold in the industry by expanding product offerings and introducing new programs for stores and ranges.

EXPANDING THE RM1 FAMILY

Following the launch of the RM1C, the Rost Martin family of pistols has expanded to include the RM1S (3.6" subcompact), RM1C Comped and RM1C California Compliant.

The RM1S carries the same characteristics as the RM1C — exceptional 5-lb. trigger, optics-

ready slide — just in a smaller, more concealable footprint. It ships with a 12-round flush magazine and a 15-round extended magazine. (RM1S and RM1C magazines are interchangeable, so RM1C owners have the option of carrying 17+1 defensive 9mm rounds.)

One notable enhancement, thanks to customer feedback, is additional texturing on the RM1S grip frame. This additional grip texturing allows for improved control, accuracy and comfort on a smaller carry platform.

According to Toomer, the texturing on the RM1S is already proving a hit with end users.

"We had customers ask for more texturing, so we listened and added some above the magazine release on the RM1S. We've already had requests for adding this to the RM1C, which we're considering," he noted.

The introduction of the RM1C Comped came sooner than initially planned. However, being a nimble and responsive brand, Rost Martin was swift to pivot.

"A lot of people are getting into the comp market, so we moved quickly into this arena. It wasn't necessarily in our rollout plan to bring it to market so quickly, but we responded," Toomer said. "We want to be a brand that's reactive to the needs of our customers — and we think with these two releases we're actually doing that."

The Golden State represents a hot, new market for Rost Martin. In Dec. 2024, the RM1C was added to the California DOJ roster of certified

handguns. Toomer shared demand for the RM1C California Compliant model has "guns flying off the shelf." The company has plans to release California-compliant versions of the RM1S and RM1C Comped later this year.

STOCKING DEALER PROGRAM

As a new company in the firearms space, Rost Martin has made a concerted effort to support its dealers with responsive customer service and dealer support.

"What we've learned from year one to year two is the absolute need to continue to engage with our dealers who are taking a chance on carrying our guns," Toomer said. "We're a new brand, so it's about getting them to hear about us and taking the next step and placing an order."

To facilitate this objective, Rost Martin introduced a stocking dealer program earlier this year.

"Our new dealer-stocking package allows dealers to buy in and get some extra added value to take a shot with our brand," Toomer shared. "The included swag pack features apparel, hats and other items so the team behind the counter can support the brand."

To participate, dealers commit to stocking five guns in total (any three RM1C models [available in black, FDE and OD Green], one RM1S and one RM1C Comped). Dealers in California can sign on with three (any RM1C, in black, FDE or gray).

The swag pack includes two hats, two T-shirts, an "Authorized Dealer" sticker, three brand stickers, a tumbler, gun mat and three gun stands.

Another way Rost Martin has elevated support for its dealers is through a rewards program. Now, sales associates can earn points by selling Rost Martin guns.

ADVANCING THE NEXT GENERATION OF FREEDOM

Rost Martin is committed to the success of its retail partners through attentive customer service and its attractive dealer program while delivering innovative, reliable firearms to passionate enthusiasts.

To partner with Rost Martin and become a stocking dealer, contact Rost Martin via email, valerie.roper@rostmartin.com, or phone, (214) 377-9659. For more info, visit rostmartin.com

The Market Is What You Make Of It

April 1 is more than just April Fool's Day — it marks the start of 2025's second quarter. With the first three months of the year already in the rearview, what are your expectations moving forward?

Inside this issue, Hank Yacek debates whether the industry is in for a "repeat performance" ("Trump Slump 2.0") while coining a term that's going to stick — "Trump Jump." Aware of this or not, you have the ability to bring either outcome in your stores this year.

Yacek contends, "The next four years are full of opportunities for businesses that can take advantage of some of the most predictable market conditions we've seen in a decade. To do so, it means acting now, being persistent and making a change before you're forced to."

Agree/disagree? Read "A Repeat Performance?" on p. 24, and let us know what you think: editor@shootingindustry.com.

SELLING THE .380 TODAY

There's no doubt we're living in a world dominated by compact and subcompact 9mm pistols. But that doesn't mean there isn't market share opportunity for the .380 caliber.

Inside his *Personal Defense Market* column (p. 18), Massad Ayoob evaluates some inherent selling points of pistols in this caliber.

"The smallest .380s are simply super-convenient to carry and easy to hide, so as not to alarm the public by allowing people to see the shape of a gun printing under a garment," he said. "This second element — discreet concealability as distinct from comfortable carry — is a selling point in and of itself."

WHAT YOUR PRECISION CUSTOMERS WANT

The allure of long-range precision



APRIL 2025

shooting will "hit different" for a smaller (but active) subset of your customers. But it's well worth it to pursue growth in this category if your surrounding area has access to longer ranges.

"It's not super hard to hit a steel target at 15 yards with a pistol," notes Allen Bennet of Full Circle Reloading & Firearms in "Go Long!" (p. 30). "But when people think about a 1,000-yard shot — it's got a certain sex appeal."

An added bonus of this segment: It's essentially immune to the panic-induced buying that can impact the handgun, shotgun and modern sporting rifle categories.

NEXT MONTH: AMMO MARKET UPDATE

In the May issue, Bryan Hendricks covers what has become one of the most intriguing topics discussed in *SI* over the years: the ammunition and reloading segment. With insights from manufacturers and dealers, Hendricks delivers a well-rounded look at what we can expect in the second half of 2025 (and addresses the powder shortage rumors, as well).

With summer on the horizon, Carolee Anita Boyles interviews a panel of dealers who share their "best practices" to get more out of hosting in-store events. Tim Barker examines the surge of buying in the suppressor segment, while Nancy Keaton explores varmint/predator hunting trends. **SI**

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



READERS REACT TO SHOT SHOW COVERAGE

Editor's Note: The following responses are to *S*'s coverage of the record-breaking 2025 SHOT Show, which was published in the March 2025 issue. Dealers, we'd like to hear your impressions of the show, too! Send us an email anytime: editor@shootingindustry.com. (The following are from LinkedIn.)

Perhaps the most comprehensive SHOT Show article I've ever seen. Tremendous reporting and insights from *Shooting Industry* Editor Jade Moldae.
— **Chris Dolnack, EVP & Chief Customer Officer**
NSSF

Great capture of the highlights — it's hard to believe all that happened in such a short amount of time!
— **Karen Butler, Founder & President**
Shoot Like A Girl

Phenomenal show for Liberty Ammunition. Several new opportunities came out of SHOT Show.
Hats off to NSSF.
— **Gary Ramey, CEO**
Liberty Ammunition


Perhaps
the most
comprehensive
SHOT Show
article I've
ever seen.
Tremendous
reporting and
insights.

Excellent article!
— **Anne Marlowe Conrad, Owner**
A.M. Conrad Communications



HOME-DEFENSE FOR WOMEN STRIKES A CHORD

Editor's Note: In the Feb. 2025 issue, FMG Digital Content and Marketing Director Ashley McGee noted the industry at large isn't doing the greatest job of differentiating home vs. self-defense for women. Her story struck a chord. Have a reply? Join the conversation! editor@shootingindustry.com

Great read, Ashley! A much more layered conversation to be having. 
— **Brenna McCoubrey, Public Relations Manager**
SureFire
Via LinkedIn

HAVE A THOUGHT WHILE READING THE ISSUE?

Let us know at comments@shootingindustry.com, facebook.com/shootingindustry or linkedin.com/company/fmg-publications



EOTECH OPENS ENGINEERING TECH CENTER IN IDAHO

EOTECH, a leader in electro-optics technology, has experienced exceptional growth over the past decade. In recent years, EOTECH diversified into magnified scopes, micro red dots, night-vision and thermal systems and on-gun laser devices. Additionally, in 2022, EOTECH added a manufacturing center that develops cutting-edge digital sensor systems.

To support these programs and future growth, EOTECH announced the opening of its new Tech Center located in Orofino, Idaho. This state-of-the-art workspace will provide research and development, engineering design and sustainment, testing and prototype capabilities for all EOTECH product categories.

“We are thrilled to open our new Tech Center in Orofino, an area that

◀ EOTECH’s 4,200-sq. ft. Tech Center opened in Orofino, Idaho, in late February. It will house a variety of functions to further the company’s technology-driven solutions.

will be the conduit between our headquarters in Michigan and our sensor factory in California,” said Aaron Hampton, EOTECH president of product development. “This facility provides us with the talent and opportunity to plant the growth initiatives for the company’s next phase of our development. We strive to inspire new technology-driven solutions, and this investment will accelerate innovation and the development of new solutions for our core and emerging markets.”

Officially opened Feb. 26, 2025, this 4,200-sq. ft. facility includes a sophisticated optics lab outfitted with cleanroom flow hoods, optical breadboard, collimators, high purity nitrogen and various tools to assemble, test and rework weapon sights and camera systems.

The mechanical lab includes small scale machining, an inspection area with granite table plus a physical and optical metrology system.

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

WEAVER MOUNTS LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

Weaver Mounts, a trusted name in rings, bases and mounts for sport optics, announced the launch of its new website, weavermounts.com. The new online platform provides consumers with comprehensive product information and direct access to the full Weaver product lineup.

Designed with user experience in mind, the site offers an easy-to-navigate interface where hunters, competitive shooters and firearm enthusiasts can browse and purchase Weaver mounting systems directly. The site also

serves as a hub for technical support, product specifications and company updates.

“With the launch of Weaver Mounts from RCBS, it was essential for us to create a website that allows shooters to easily access our company’s iconic rings, mounts and bases,” said Hodgdon Powder Co. VP of Marketing Aaron Oelger.

Now exclusively licensed by RCBS, Weaver Mounts has been a leader in optics mounting solutions for over 90 years. The new website reinforces Weaver’s commitment to providing high-quality, precision-engineered products while enhancing the customer experience.



Since 1930, Weaver Mounts has delivered innovation and precision to the shooting experience. Engineered to be the most reliable optics mounting systems available,

Weaver offers a full line of rings, bases and mounts for firearms. Weaver Mounts have been manufactured to the highest standards at the RCBS facility in Oroville, Calif. since 2012. Weaver Mounts is owned by Revelyst and exclusively licensed by RCBS.

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

INDUSTRY NEWS

OLIN CORP. BREAKS GROUND ON NEW LAKE CITY ARMY AMMUNITION PLANT

Olin Winchester, in collaboration with the U.S. Army's Joint Program Executive Office for Armaments and Ammunition (JPEO A&A) and Joint Munitions Command (JMC), announced the groundbreaking of the new 6.8mm Ammunition Facility at the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant (LCAAP). This facility is part of the Next Generation Squad Weapons (NGSW) Program and represents a significant step in the Army's modernization efforts.

"Olin Winchester has a rich history in ammunition manufacturing excellence and support of the U.S. military. We are proud to build on this American legacy through this opportunity to partner



with the U.S. Army to construct this transformational facility and bring new capabilities to the warfighter," said Ken Lane, Olin president and CEO.

Various federal, state and local representatives were among the more than 100 special guests attending the awards ceremony.

"This facility will represent a significant step forward in equipping our soldiers with the advanced munitions they need to maintain overmatch on the battlefield. With 90% of the work supported by industries in the Kansas City region, and nearly 50 local businesses involved in the construction, this project

will strengthen the defense industrial base, create well-paying jobs and drive economic growth in the local community. Lake City has been central to our nation's ammunition production since 1941, and this facility builds on that proud and historic legacy," said Maj. Gen. John T. Reim.

The 450,000-sq.-ft. advanced ammunition production facility will be capable of manufacturing all components of 6.8mm ammunition, as well as finished rounds for the U.S. military, reinforcing the iconic legacy of LCAAP and its vital role in national defense.

[/ winchester.com](#)

GUNBROKER RELEASES 2024 SALES DATA REPORTS

GunBroker has compiled its 2024 sales data and released its Top Selling firearms reports. The data is based on sales transactions from GunBroker's more than 8 million users throughout the year.

Ruger earned the top spot for 2024, riding the popularity of its 10/22 and American rifle platforms.

Also making the top 10 list are SIG SAUER, Smith & Wesson, GLOCK, Colt, Springfield Armory, Beretta, CZ-USA, Henry and Browning.

SIG SAUER topped the handguns list, largely due to the popularity of its P365 and P320 product lines.

Rounding out the top 10 handguns list are the Ruger American, GLOCK 43, CZ-USA CZ 75, Ruger Mark IV, Smith & Wesson M&P9, Springfield Hellcat and Amcor/RIA Rock.

The top rifles list also saw Ruger with the first and second slots. The Marlin 1895 earned third place. The top three consist of a semi-auto, a bolt action and a lever action, showing the most diverse list of the year.

The rest of the rifle top 10 list include the Browning X-Bolt, Henry Side Gate,



Remington 700, Henry Big Boy, CZ-USA Model 457, Savage 10/110 and Savage Axis.

In shotguns, the Mossberg 590 and Remington 870 continue to battle for the top spot. Next comes the Beretta A300, celebrated for its superb reliability and ease of use.

Rounding out the shotgun top 10 are the Beretta 1301, Benelli M4, KelTec KSG, Mossberg 500, Beretta A400, Benelli Super Black and Winchester Super X.

[/ gunbroker.com](#)

FIOCCHI NAMES SPORTS SOUTH TOP 2024 DISTRIBUTION PARTNER

Fiocchi announced Sports South is the recipient of its 2024 Distribution Partner of the Year Award. This recognition highlights Sports South's exceptional dedication, outstanding performance and strategic partnership in driving Fiocchi's continued growth and success across the U.S.

"Sports South exemplifies what it means to be an extraordinary partner.

Their commitment to excellence, industry expertise and unwavering support of Fiocchi's mission have been instrumental in achieving record-breaking results. Their deep understanding of the market, proactive approach and consistent support have made them an indispensable ally," said Fiocchi CEO David Blenker.

The 2024 Distribution Partner of the Year Award reflects Fiocchi's commitment to celebrating partnerships that drive mutual success and embody the values of trust, innovation and excellence.

Sports South's dedication to representing the Fiocchi brand with



integrity and professionalism sets the standard for what a true distribution partner should be.

Fiocchi and Sports South share a commitment to delivering high-quality products and exceptional service to customers, and this recognition underscores the strength of their collaboration.

[/ fiocchiusa.com](#)

FALCO HOLSTERS CELEBRATES 35 YEARS WITH GUN & HOLSTER GIVEAWAY

FALCO Holsters, crafter of premium handgun holsters and everyday carry accessories, is celebrating its 35th anniversary.

To thank its customers for decades of loyalty the company recently offered a giveaway package featuring a hand-carved, leather OWB custom holster (CX11) paired with a Springfield Armory 1911 DS Prodigy, valued at \$1,898.95.

Kelly McBride was announced as the lucky winner of the gun and holster combo.

“For 35 years, we’ve dedicated ourselves to hand-making gun holsters



In celebration of its 35th anniversary, FALCO Holsters paired a CX11 floral holster with a Springfield Armory 1911 DS Prodigy for a special customer giveaway. Kelly McBride, winner of the package, told FALCO: “I had zero thought I’d actually win! The gun with such a beautiful holster — it’s mind-blowing.”

that embody quality, reliability and the timeless art of old-world craftsmanship. This milestone is about more than simply celebrating our journey; it’s about honoring the people who have made our

success possible: our customers,” said Martin Lukačko, marketing manager for FALCO Holsters.

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



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L3HARRIS ANNOUNCES SECOND FULL-SCALE ENVG-B PRODUCTION ORDER FROM U.S. ARMY

L3Harris Technologies announced it received a \$263-million order from the U.S. Army for continued production of the Enhanced Night Vision Goggle – Binocular (ENVG-B). This is the second order under the full-scale production Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity program, following a similar award earlier this year.

“Our innovative, fused night-vision technology provides U.S. soldiers the most sophisticated capability available to identify and engage targets in limited light before adversaries see them. With the ability to extend the system as a communication hub or sensor, we can increase soldiers’ situational awareness and drive connectivity with the larger Integrated Tactical Network,” said Sam Mehta, president of communication systems for L3Harris.



“The defense industrial base in New Hampshire contributes immensely to our national security, and this new investment in L3Harris’ ENVG-B program will continue to fuel production of cutting-edge night vision capability for the warfighter in Londonderry,” said Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.).

L3Harris has delivered more than 18,000 ENVG-B systems to the Army to date, providing industry-leading Figure of Merit levels and digital overlays that augment performance. L3Harris will

continue enhancing ENVG-B and similar technologies through investments in night-vision technology, AI and open-system architecture development to expand the device’s critical capabilities for the thousands of systems the Army will deploy.

The company has also delivered more than 28,000 advanced vision goggles to warfighters worldwide, including its Binocular Night Vision Device – Fused solution.

[/l3harris.com](https://l3harris.com)

STREAMLIGHT NAMES TOP SALES PARTNERS

Streamlight Inc. announced its 2024 Sales Rep Agency of the Year for the law enforcement market is Holt & McArdle Associates Inc. The award recognized their outstanding sales achievement and contributions to Streamlight’s growth in the L.E. market.

Based in Garnet Valley, Pa., Holt & McArdle is a leading manufacturers representative agency serving the industrial, firefighting and L.E. markets. Their commitment to excellence and strong customer relationships have played a key role in driving success for Streamlight products within their territory.

“(Holt & McArdle’s) dedication to serving the law enforcement community and their proven ability to connect with customers have been instrumental in our continued growth. We are proud to partner with them and look forward to their ongoing contributions in 2025



From left: Ray Sharrah, Streamlight CEO; Francis McArdle, Molly McArdle and Frank McArdle of Holt & McArdle; and Brett Marquardt, Tim Taylor and Allen Lance of Streamlight.

and beyond,” said Streamlight President Michael F. Dineen.

Streamlight named Washmon Sales Group as its 2024 Sales Rep Agency of the Year for the sporting goods market. Washmon Sales Group, based in Rockwall, Texas, received the award for outstanding sales achievement and contributions to growing Streamlight’s sporting goods market within their sales territories.

“Washmon Sales Group’s exceptional sales performance in 2024 contributed to our success in the sporting goods sector, which is a key market segment for Streamlight,” said Dineen. “We salute their accomplishments and look forward to their continuing contributions to our sales efforts.”

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

SAVAGE DEBUTS NEW MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Savage Arms continues to honor its heritage while embracing the future of firearms through a new marketing campaign: "Not Your Grandpa's Savage."

With a focus on the needs of today's shooters, Savage is dedicated to providing firearms that not only meet but also exceed expectations. This new campaign will challenge today's hunters and shooters. This re-imagined Savage is one that modern hunters will tell stories about for generations.

"Savage is extremely proud of its long-standing place in the American firearms tradition," said Beth Shimanski, director of marketing at Savage Arms. "That heritage and tradition continue to evolve



every day as our engineers work tirelessly to create new designs that reshape the world of firearms. This new campaign will challenge the consumers in our industry and their perceptions of our brand. Think you know Savage? Think again."

A forward-thinking company that never forgets its roots and heritage, Savage is packing innovative technology into each product that it brings to market.

With new product categories and premium product lines such as the KLYM Series/110 Ultralite Elite and rimfire lever actions, Savage offers customers a broad product selection, ensuring there is a product for every hunter and shooter at any price point.

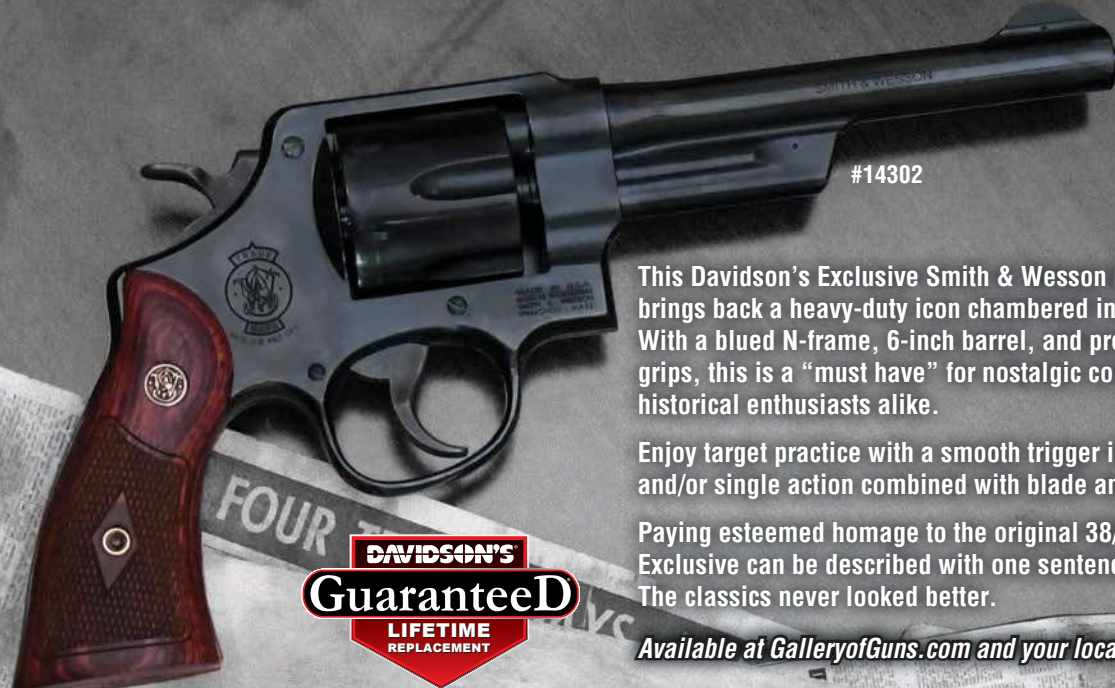
[/savagearms.com](http://savagearms.com)



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OTIS ANNOUNCES 2024 SALES AWARDS

During SHOT Show 2025, Otis Technology honored its 2024 top-performing industry partners.

Otis' 2024 Sporting Goods Sales Rep Awards recipient is Chris Roody of Simpson Sales Co.

Every year Otis Technology presents awards to the sales representative and sales agency that have shown initiative, sales growth and outstanding customer service over the course of the year.

"Chris Roody's ambition and tenacity, coupled with his unorthodox ideas, are key contributing factors for his success in securing new business for Otis Technology and Shooter's Choice. His efforts in 2024 led to the addition of countless new retailers and remarkable growth with our key accounts. We are incredibly proud to have him representing our brands in the state of Florida, and want to congratulate him on earning this award," said Mollie Martin, Eastern regional sales manager for Otis.

Otis also named Jeff Robles & Associates as the 2024 Sales Agency of the Year.

"They have been loyally representing our brands for 21 years, and are our longest-tenured agency, overseeing the Western U.S. and TALO states," said Kenda Campbell, VP of commercial sales for Otis. "During a challenging economic year, they successfully managed to help us increase sales by over 32 percent, spurred



From left: Kenda Campbell (Otis VP of commercial sales), Chris Roody (Simpson Sales Company territory sales rep), Kenesha Bourns, (RSR director of purchasing), Bill Kleftis (Otis CEO) and Mollie Martin (Otis Eastern region sales manager).

by private label programs and increased product placement in key accounts. We are grateful for their representation and look forward to working with Jeff and his team in 2025."

Otis Technology & Shooter's Choice announced the recipient of the Customer of the Year award for 2024 is Sportsman's Warehouse.

"As a longtime customer of Otis Technology, we are delighted to name Sportsman's Warehouse as the recipient of this year's coveted award. They had a banner year under the direction of their new buyer, Dan Bartlett. With his expert guidance, we have been able to significantly grow our partnership through private label opportunities and a more robust product line offering. We look forward to continued work with Dan and his team as we continue our growth

trajectory," Campbell said.

Lastly, Otis Technology awarded 2024 Distributor of the Year to RSR Group.

"Openness to communicate and collaborate has been a key driving factor for our success with RSR Group, with much credit going to our buyer. Because of his dedication, RSR Group achieved impressive growth over last year. As a long-standing customer, we are proud to award them Distributor of the Year and look forward to many more years of continued partnership."

Otis Technology is known for manufacturing advanced gun cleaning systems and accessories. The superior breech-to-muzzle design, combined with unmatched quality, has positioned Otis as the gun care system of choice with the U.S. military.

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

ZANDERS RECOGNIZES SAVAGE ARMS DISTRIBUTOR BUYER OF THE YEAR

Zanders Sporting Goods announced Darell Seibold was named the Savage Arms Distributor Buyer of the Year.

With over 30 years of dedicated experience, Seibold has played a pivotal role at Zanders, contributing his expertise across multiple positions and making a lasting impact on the company's growth and success. His keen industry insight, strong relationships with vendors and

unwavering commitment to excellence have earned him this distinguished recognition from Savage Arms.

Savage Arms has maintained a long-standing partnership with Zanders, built on mutual respect and shared values. Darell's commitment to sourcing high-quality products and ensuring exceptional service has been instrumental in strengthening this relationship.

"Savage Arms has been a key partner for Zanders for many years now. Like Savage, we strive to do things the right way, treating our partners fairly and with respect. I am incredibly appreciative and humbled by this acknowledgment," said



Seibold.

Zanders Sporting Goods is an all-women-owned company based in Sparta, Ill., with over 50 years of experience supporting U.S. firearms dealers. Its extensive inventory of more than 40,000 products housed in its state-of-the-art warehouse facility includes firearms, archery equipment, accessories and camping gear.

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

COLT SUPPORTS NSSF'S PROJECT CHILDSAFE WITH "SAFETY IMPACT AWARD"

Colt's Manufacturing's innovative "Safety Impact Award" campaign, in which fans vote for football legends and their chosen safety non-profit organizations, netted NSSF's Project ChildSafe a top donation of \$15,000.

Football great Clay Matthews III tallied the most votes. Matthews, who enjoys hunting and target shooting, chose Project ChildSafe as his safety charity for the campaign. Project ChildSafe is the long-running firearm safety education program of NSSF that has distributed more than 41 million gun locks, and is active in every state in the country.

"We're grateful to Colt for highlighting firearm safety in this creative way, and to Clay Matthews for selecting NSSF's Project ChildSafe as his charity. I'm a football fan,



From left: Shane Wheaton, Colt VP of commercial sales; Joe Bartozzi, NSSF president and CEO; Bill Brassard, NSSF senior director, communications; and Mike Robinson, Colt CZ head of group marketing.

and seeing these football greats stand up for safety is something I appreciate and admire," said Joe Bartozzi, NSSF president and CEO.

"At Colt, safety is at the core of everything we do. We believe in supporting organizations working tirelessly to educate and empower our communities. The Safety Impact Award is our way of acknowledging their dedication and providing resources to expand their impact," said Colt's Manufacturing president Josh Dorsey.

The former football stars and their associated charities participating in the Safety Impact Award campaign in

addition to Matthews were Adam Vinatieri with Clays for Charity, his firearm safety fundraising event; Joe Thomas with Ducks Unlimited, the association for hunter-conservationists; and Fletcher Cox with the International Hunter Education Association.

Colt made a \$5,000 donation to each safety organization involved. Enthusiastic fans then propelled Clay Matthews and Project ChildSafe to the \$10,000 first-place prize, providing a total of \$15,000 in support to the Project ChildSafe Foundation. [SI](#)

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

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

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NEWSMAKERS



T. DEBOLT

NSSF Welcomes New Board Of Governors Members

NSSF welcomed Thomas DeBolt and Jacquelyn Clark to its elected board of governors. DeBolt is the CEO of Benelli USA and president of Stoeger Industries. Clark is the founder and co-owner of Bristlecone Shooting, Training & Retail Center in Lakewood, Colo.

“NSSF welcomes Jacquelyn and Tom to the NSSF Board of Governors,” said Joe Bartozzi, NSSF president and CEO. “We are fortunate to have their support and to be able to draw on their extensive experience in the firearm industry.”



M. DINEEN

Streamlight Inc. Promotes President

Michael F. Dineen is now serving as the president of Streamlight. He succeeded Raymond L. Sharrah, who retains the title of CEO and will provide corporate executive oversight. As president, Dineen maintains his previous responsibilities as chief revenue officer and will also lead product management, accounting and finance and IT operations.

Sharrah stated, “[Dineen] consistently demonstrated his ability to drive results, foster innovation and build strong relationships with our employees, customers and suppliers. I am confident he will show the same exemplary leadership as president of our company.”

Dineen joined Streamlight in 2009 as the VP of sales and marketing and was appointed chief revenue officer in 2022.

He earned a B.S. in management information systems from Saint Joseph’s University and an MBA with a focus in marketing

from Seton Hall University.



M. LAMB

WATCHTOWER Firearms Adds Board Member

Former Pinal County (Ariz.) Sheriff Mark Lamb has joined the WATCHTOWER Firearms board of advisors.

Jason Colosky, WATCHTOWER CEO, stated, “He has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to excellence, serving his community with both passion and integrity and a deep love of country. He will be a valuable addition to our team.”



F. CORTES

Global Defense Appoints Int’l Sales Director

Global Defense announced the appointment of François Cortes as the new director of international sales. Cortes will lead efforts to expand the company’s global presence by developing strategic sales initiatives, identifying emerging market opportunities and fostering strong relationships with key clients and partners.

“[Cortes] intercultural expertise will be instrumental in driving our global expansion efforts and delivering unmatched value to our clients,” said Global Defense CEO Jordan Young.

Before joining Global Defense, Cortes held senior positions at leading firearms and defense companies.



Wiley X Adds Key Hires

Wiley X expanded its sales leadership team with the addition of three seasoned executives: Seth Quackenbush as director of sales for the outdoor division,

Jack Schindler as national sales manager for the outdoor division and Johnathan Weikum as director of sales for the Optical Division.

With over 20 years of experience growing renowned brands such as Ride, Fjällräven and Stanley, Quackenbush is focused on strengthening Wiley X’s partnerships to elevate the brand’s impact in the outdoor market.

Schindler also brings over 20 years of experience driving revenue and brand development, for companies such as O’Neill, C1RCA and Adio Footwear.

With extensive experience in the eyewear industry, Weikum played a key role in launching and expanding Costa’s Optical and Sunglass Specialty Channel, driving growth and leading national sales initiatives. He later spearheaded strategic partnerships for Costa and Oakley.



P. DICKSON

Davidson’s Inc. Promotes Staff

Davidson’s announced the promotions of Paul Dickson, Eric Mueller and Justin Saldivar, each to the position of senior merchandising director.



E. MUELLER



J. SALDIVAR

Dickson has worked in warehouse management, operations and merchandising roles within Davidson’s and ProForce Law Enforcement for a combined tenure of 20 years.

Mueller has more than 16 years of experience in sales, sales coaching and purchasing for Davidson’s.

Saldivar has 14 years of experience in merchandising from his time at Davidson’s and a large

national sporting retailer before joining the company.

Bryan Tucker, Davidson's CEO, said, "Given their extensive knowledge of firearms and firearm-related products, along with their extensive experience and being in step with our corporate culture I am very confident they will help Davidson's continue to enhance our position as top wholesaler in the firearms industry."



C. DERR

Hawke Optics Names Marketing Manager

Cameron Derr has joined Hawke Optics to serve as the company's marketing manager.

"We were very impressed by Cameron's experience and vision for expanding the reach of Hawke Optics," said Kevin Sheehan, Hawke Optics VP of sales and

marketing. "His work with influencer marketing, podcasts and video production will be a major asset."

Derr spent five years as the content director for Exodus Outdoor Gear.

He earned a bachelor's in accounting, personal finance and corporate finance from Clarion University.



B. HOPPER

Katadyn North America Expands Leadership Team

Katadyn Group announced additions to its North American leadership team with the appointment of Brook Hopper as the director of marketing for North America and Jeff Pratt as the director of sales for North America.




J. PRATT

Chris Voxland,

president of Katadyn North America, noted, "Brook's expertise in brand strategy and purpose-driven marketing will be instrumental in expanding Katadyn Group's presence."

Andy Welling, VP of sales for Katadyn North America, stated, "[Pratt's] deep understanding of the market and proven track record in sales will be instrumental in strengthening our position and accelerating growth across North America."

Hopper has over 20 years of experience in global marketing, brand development and consumer engagement across the outdoor, cycling and footwear industries.

Pratt brings more than 15 years of experience in sales leadership for brands such as Black Diamond Equipment, Grundéns and Arcade Belts. 

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BY MASSAD AYOOB

SELLING THE .380 TODAY

The .380 ACP (Automatic Colt Pistol) cartridge — designed by none other than John Moses Browning — was introduced in 1908 in the Colt Pocket Model pistol. It was an instant hit. Like its .32-caliber predecessor in 1903, it was slim and flat, and easy to carry, as well.

It would sell nicely in the U.S., a country where no indigenous firearms manufacturer would produce a pistol in 9mm Luger until the lightweight Colt Commander of 1949/1950. Savage and Remington also made .380s with varying degrees of commercial success.

By 1930, Americans were buying imported Walthers in this caliber too, and many GIs brought those and pistols like the German Sauer and Italian Beretta Model 1934 pistols back from WWII as war souvenirs. Americans would continue to buy European pocket Autos in .380 thereafter. Colt would eventually produce micro-size 1911-ish pistols in the caliber, as would other manufacturers.

RUGER LCP REIGNITED INTEREST

Long-time dealers will remember what revitalized the caliber in this country was Ruger's LCP (Light Compact Pistol), a well-made and affordable homage to the Kel-Tec P3AT. The LCP sold so fast it created a shortage of .380 ACP ammo that lasted for a while.

Others jumped on the bandwagon: SIG with various models, Kahr Arms, Kimber, S&W (with their first-generation BODYGUARD .380) and more.

This combined with the related trends of expanded concealed carry licensing and the constitutional carry movement, now the law in 29 states, to create a much wider market for .380 pistols.

There were several reasons for their popularity. Let's analyze those, because each is a selling point.

.380 SELLING POINTS

First, there is the tiny size and feathery weight of the smallest models: the "light" and "compact" of the LCP's name. The smallest .380s are simply super-convenient to carry and easy to hide, so as not to alarm the public by allowing people to see the shape of a gun printing under a garment. This second element — discreet concealability as distinct from comfortable carry — is a selling point in and of itself.

Second, many .380s — but not all! — have relatively mild recoil. Smith & Wesson's new BODYGUARD 2.0, for example, is night-and-day different in handling and "shootability" from the original, which had a long, heavy, double-action pull for every shot and felt rather snappy on recoil.

The 2.0's "kick" isn't a lot more than a .22, and its trigger pull is much more amenable to fast, accurate shooting. Its sights — a big notch rear and an easy-to-see big front post with a bright orange dot and a tritium night sight dot to boot — are far superior to those of the original BODYGUARD .380.

Ruger likewise advanced in the

◀ The best .380s are easy to shoot well. Here, Mas has just placed five head shots from 15 yards (note the double in upper right of group) with a GLOCK 42. The grip is just long enough to fit his pinkie finger, tucked tight underneath.

trigger pull area, supplementing their original double-action-only LCP with the LCP II, boasting a much shorter, lighter and generally easier trigger pull.

The GLOCK 42 .380 is particularly easy to shoot well, even with only two fingers on the tiny grip frame that surrounds its six-round magazine. (Sales tip: Show the customer they can still have a strong firing hold with their pinkie finger tucked tightly under the butt.)

The cartridge capacity question brings us to a third advantage. Ruger is selling the hell out of their LCP MAX with higher cartridge capacity. The S&W BODYGUARD 2.0 comes with one supposedly 12-round and one supposedly 10-round magazine, though I've found either works better downloaded by one. (A tip you might want to give customers buying one.) Nonetheless, it's a great leap forward from a six-round micro-.380 magazine.

Finally, some people want a very small carry gun because they have hands weakened by age, illness or injury. This means they need a slide that's easy to operate by hand.



The smallest .380s are simply super-convenient to carry and easy to hide.

In .380, you now have many choices. Ruger's slightly larger LC380 was expressly made to be easy to rack; ditto their Lite Rack Security-380. They even have a .22 LR version of the LCP with an especially easy-to-run slide. Smith & Wesson's EZ series is so named because of its easy-racking slide, and it came out in .380 before it came out in 9mm.

The many mini-1911s in .380 from Browning, Colt, Kimber and SIG (and I've probably missed a few) have easy-to-manipulate slides. Be sure to show the customer how to first cock the hammer,

alleviating the resistance of the mainspring to the slide's rearward movement.

THE DOWNSIDE

Ethical marketing demands we don't encourage good people to protect themselves with guns so low in power we wouldn't carry them ourselves.

Historically, the .380 was considered something between too weak to trust for self-defense and marginally, minimally adequate for the purpose. The great gun expert Jeff Cooper once disdainfully said if you wanted a .380 you wanted one with lots of bullets because you'd need lots of those little bullets to stop a violent attacker.

Well, today, we have easy-to-carry .380s with lots of bullets ... and we also have much better ammo than the early .380 carriers had access to. The 95-grain round nose FMJ — long “the only .380 game in town” — tended to create an icepick-like puckered wound that simply didn't damage a whole lot of tissue.

I had the privilege of knowing Charles “Skeeter” Skelton, one of the great gunwriters of the latter 20th century and a veteran lawman. He was the first, to my knowledge, to do testing that determined .380 ball ammo had exactly the same wound profile as 158-grain round nose lead .38 Special from a 2"-barrel concealment revolver. It made him switch from his five-shot S&W and six-shot Colt .38 Special snubs to a higher-capacity Walther PP for deep concealment in the hot weather where he lived.

However, Skelton was also acutely aware both of those cartridges, the round-nose .38 Special and the round-nose .380, had developed extremely poor reputations as “manstoppers” in actual gunfights. An excellent shot, he was counting on accurate bullet placement when he carried something smaller than his preferred .357 Magnum revolvers and .45 Autos.

Today, we hear experts say, “Penetration is most important, so load your .380 with ball ammo.” This



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unfortunately overlooks the long, poor history of such bullets in quickly ending gunfights.

Are .380 hollowpoints the answer? It depends on the question. Historically this “9mm Short” round has had enough power to expand a hollowpoint with a short wound path or to drill a narrow channel deep enough with ball ammo, but not both.



Discreet concealability as distinct from comfortable carry is a selling point in and of itself.

The Hornady XTP 90-grain jacketed hollowpoint seems to come closest in ballistic gelatin testing to reaching acceptable depth with at least some expansion.

Fluted bullet loads from Lehigh or Black Hills' HoneyBadger show promise, but we aren't seeing enough actual results on the street to know for sure. Federal's recent Punch .380 is another promising but unproven hollowpoint.

Experts still debate the issue. Master instructor Tom Givens (rangemaster.com) won't allow any caliber less than 9mm in his Instructor classes. Dr. Gary Roberts was a protégé of the late Col. Martin Fackler, MD, and inherited Fackler's mantle as the leading authority on wound ballistics today. He recommends certain .38 Special loads in small revolvers but does not recommend any .380s.

THE BOTTOM LINE

From the ethical marketing perspective, you may not personally care for the .380 and it's perfectly okay to tell the customer why it's not your first choice. At the same time, however, history shows us “did you have a gun” is far more important to violent attack survival than “what kind of ammo did you have in that gun.”

A great many of your customers' experience and lifestyles will limit them to something very small and light, or no gun at all. In this case, you're doing them a favor telling them to buy a small .380.

Of course, continuing in the ethics vein, it's critical to explain to the customer the importance of training and practice to put that little .380 bullet where it's most likely to stop a violent, homicidal attack. **GI**



BY ASHLEY MCGEE

10 NEW-FOR-2025 STANDOUT PRODUCTS

AS more women take an active role in shooting sports, personal defense and professional tactical fields, manufacturers are stepping up to meet their unique needs. The latest offerings for 2025 emphasize fit, function and versatility, ensuring women have access to high-quality gear tailored to their specific requirements.

From firearms and footwear to concealed carry solutions and protective equipment, these new products blend practicality with performance, helping women stay prepared, confident and comfortable in any scenario.

1. SIG SAUER M400 ROSE

The SIG SAUER P365 Rose continues to be one of the most popular handguns among female gun owners. Using the same proven formula, the M400 ROSE was developed in collaboration with world champion shooter Lena Miculek to help women confidently step into rifle ownership. This 5.56 NATO AR-15 features a lightweight build with a 10" free-floating M-LOK handguard, a ROMEO5 GENII red dot sight and a two-stage Matchlite Duo trigger.

Matte rose gold accents give it a distinctive look, while ambidextrous controls make it accessible for all shooters. The rifle comes with a custom carrying case, rose-colored dummy rounds and online training resources

to guide new owners through their first steps in rifle shooting.

2. RUGER RXM

While not specifically made with women in mind, the Ruger RXM (MSRP \$499) blends concealability with capacity in a slim, optics-ready package. Chambered in 9mm, the pistol offers 12+1 or 15+1 capacity, a 3.2" barrel and a tritium fiber optic front sight for quick target acquisition. The textured grip and reversible magazine release enhance handling, while the black nitride slide and stealth gray frame give it a sleek, modern look. At just 19 oz., it's an everyday carry option that balances performance and portability.

3. FN REFLEX XL MRD

FN America expanded its micro-compact lineup with the Reflex XL MRD (MSRP \$719), featuring a longer barrel and extended grip for enhanced accuracy and control. Chambered in 9mm, it comes standard with a 15-round magazine and an 18-round extended option. An internal hammer-fired system ensures a smooth 5-lb. trigger pull and interchangeable backstraps offer user-friendly ergonomics.

Perhaps most appealing is its easy-to-rack slide. Optics-ready and available in black or FDE, the Reflex XL MRD is built for precision and comfort in a carry-sized package.

◀ The SIG M400 ROSE expands the ROSE family to include a long-gun option. It ships with a custom ROSE carrying case, rose-colored dummy rounds and provides access to online training resources. (Image: SIG SAUER)

4. TASER BOLT 2

For non-lethal self-defense, the TASER Bolt 2 (\$449.99) provides up to 15' of stopping power with a 30-second full-muscle lockup. Compact and discreet, it fits easily in a purse or pocket while offering a built-in laser and 210-lumen LED for precision aiming. The Safe Escape Product Replacement Guarantee ensures that if used in self-defense, a replacement unit is provided at no charge.

5. VERTX LENA COLLECTION

Lena Miculek has also teamed up with VERTX to launch the Lena Collection, featuring the Women's Shirt Jacket and Women's Stretch Flannel. The Shirt Jacket (\$74.99) offers CCW compatibility, eight pockets and a relaxed fit for unrestricted movement.

The Stretch Flannel (\$64.99) combines a soft cotton blend with added stretch, CCW-friendly features and a drop-back hem for extra coverage. Both pieces blend style with tactical functionality.

6. GUN TOTE'N MAMAS LEATHER WEAVE

Each year, Gun Tote'n Mamas uses SHOT Show to gather feedback on its new and reimagined designs that may become part of the line. From colored leathers to unique textures, it was evident they've taken careful consideration of the younger demographic they are encountering.

For me, the standout was a line of sleek leather weave-pattern concealed carry bags that included both new styles and some of the brands' bestsellers like its Sling Backpack (MSRP \$159.95). There were two sizes on display, both featuring RFID protection, versatile front-carry options and ample space for everyday essentials. Designed for both right- and left-handed users, it includes a standard holster for quick access.

7. MARSUPIAL GEAR XL CONCEALED CARRY BELT BAG

Based on the popularity of its original concealed carry belt bag designed in collaboration with prominent firearms instructor Paige

Roux (@somechickwhoshoots), the Marsupial Gear XL Concealed Carry Belt Bag (\$100) was created based on demand from those who need extra space without sacrificing discretion.

It's made from rugged 1000D Cordura and fits larger firearms such as the GLOCK 17, FN 509 and SIG P365 XL. With an adjustable strap, it can be worn cross-body or around the waist. A hook-and-loop holster system allows for quick deployment, making it ideal for on-the-go security. Internal dimensions: 6"H x 8.75"W x 2"D.

8. GARMONT T8 ATHENA BOOTS

Built for demanding conditions, the Garmont T8 Athena boots (\$155) are designed to match the anatomical



Savvy brands are partnering with prominent female instructors and competitors to assist in the development of product lines, such as Paige Roux (the Marsupial Gear Concealed Carry Belt Bag, **top**) and Lena Miculek (VERTX Lena Collection Shirt Jacket, **bottom**).

structure of a woman's foot. The suede leather and polyester upper provide durability and breathability, while the dual-density EVA midsole ensures comfort for long hours on your feet. A slightly raised heel and enhanced arch support accommodate the shorter Achilles tendon in women, reducing fatigue. Weighing in at just 13.76 oz. per boot (size 7), these non-waterproof boots are AR670-1 compliant and built for action.

9. WALKER'S RAZOR SLIM ELECTRONIC MUFFS

Tell your customers: protecting their hearing doesn't mean sacrificing style. The Walker's Razor Slim Electronic Muffs (\$59.99) now come in fun designs like pink or yellow sprinkles while maintaining the same slim, low-profile fit. With a 23 dB noise-reduction rating and sound-activated compression, these muffs amplify ambient sounds while blocking harmful noise levels, ensuring clear communication at the range or on the hunt.

While I don't see myself rocking pink sprinkles at the range, my daughter would love these! And if that's what it takes to get her out shooting with me more, they're worth every penny.

10. JESSIE & JAMES LASSEN UNISEX CONCEALED CARRY VINTAGE BACKPACK

For your customers looking for a backpack that doesn't scream, "I'm concealing a gun," the team at Jessie & James has them covered with the unisex Lassen Concealed Carry Vintage Backpack (\$79.99). Available in five colors, the Lassen is from the brand's new canvas wash collection, which also includes waist bag and sling bag styles.

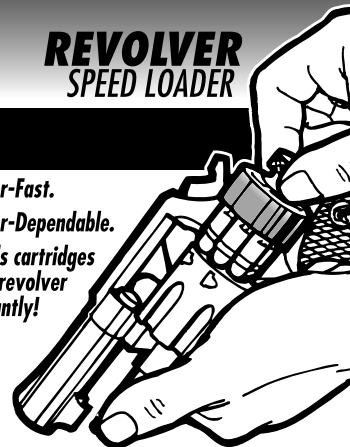
Made from durable, water-resistant canvas, the backpack features a large concealed compartment (11"W x 9"H) with two zipper openings on the side — friendly to both left- and right-handed users — and a front zippered pocket. The main compartment has a large elastic pocket and four additional slip pockets inside to keep essentials neatly organized and easily accessible. **SI**

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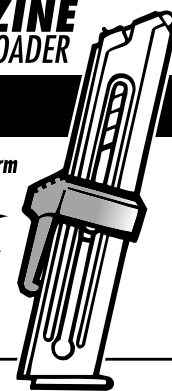
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BY MICHELLE SCHEUERMANN

Image: phonlamaiphoto / Adobe Stock

UNLOCKING AI'S POTENTIAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the game fast. By now, you've (hopefully) read the articles on this topic in other issues of *SI*.¹ (If not, see the footnotes 1A and 1B at the end of this article.) You tried a few services and could be disappointed with the results. Is it you? Is it the AI tool? It could be a combination of both.

In short, AI is still learning — and it isn't perfect. The biggest mistake made with AI is taking it at its word. However, with just a few tweaks in learning *how* to speak to AI, the best results are just a well-written prompt away.

THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB

First, be sure to use the right AI tool for the job. As seen in previous articles, there are hundreds of tool options. What tool to use depends on the desired outcomes: written vs. design vs. video vs. audio.

Yes, tools such as ChatGPT, Claude or Google's Gemini can do "all the things," but their strengths — and weaknesses — become apparent after use. Those three are likely the best all-around tools, and each comes with an app for on-the-go AI needs.

After picking the AI tool, choose the paid version instead of the free version. Why? Because of privacy issues. Most AI tools use the data provided to them to train the AI responses. (Review the

privacy policies on the AI tool to learn more.)

Additionally, paid versions typically have more storage (to remember previous prompts and inputs given) and won't cut off prompts — meaning, some AI tools get overwhelmed, and suddenly you're booted out.

I have the Claude app installed on my phone and use Jasper on my desktop. Note: Don't think using a paid version makes the responses to prompts "better." (See below for an example.) Google calls these inaccuracies to questions "hallucinations" inside its Gemini product. It sometimes happens when the tool gives bad answers. The pro-level prompting tips below can fix some of that. Always double-check the answers.

5 PROMPTING TIPS

Let's get to it. Here are five pro-level prompting tips for using AI:

1. Be Specific: AI works best knowing it has a defined role.

Weak Prompt: "Make it better."

Strong Prompt: "Rewrite this blog/email/social media post using powerful words, but keep to a 6th-grade reading level and add emotional appeal."

2. Give AI A Role: AI likes to know who it is. Like the first tip, getting granular with AI is a good thing.

Weak Prompt: "Review my email."

Strong Prompt: "You're a busy

◀ The more inputs given, the more AI tools can create complete works for you, all using your business voice and writing style. The burning question: Can you unlock its potential?

business owner who likes direct emails with calls to action. Review this email for tone and impact."

3. Think Strategically: AI is not basic, so don't treat it as such. Its bounds are unknown, and we've barely scratched the surface. Some of the best prompts I've seen others use are "What am I missing?" or "Tell me something about this product no one else has said." Truly, think outside the box when giving prompts to AI.

Weak Prompt: "Write a blog post."

Strong Prompt: "Read this blog post I framed and give me two prompts about what I'm missing."

4. Ask For Options: You don't have to settle for one response. Again, be as specific as possible, and don't take the first answer as the "be-all and end-all." Ask AI to review again and take more time to review the options provided.

Weak Prompt: "Write a headline."

Strong Prompt: "Take your time to create five headlines based upon this body of work; make two controversial, two witty and one emotional."

5. Request Analysis: You can ask for insights in addition to answers. Use AI as a sounding board — be it an editor, creative director or producer. Make it think. Give it a role and ask it to analyze the data inputted. Some AI tools won't take URLs, and some allow for attachments (again, paid versions typically will do both). The more (good) information provided, the better responses received.

Weak Prompt: "Is this social media post good?"

Strong: "Evaluate this with a lens of persuasion principles and give me three suggested improvements."

AN EXPERIMENT

Let's experiment with AI. I provided this prompt: "You are writing an article for businesses that need beginner-level instruction on using AI tools. What am I missing in this guide?"

Next, I inputted the above five suggestions. Below is the response provided:

From AI: "Your guide is already packed with great tips, but here are a few additional ideas to make it even more comprehensive and beginner-friendly."

6. Iterate & Refine: AI thrives on

iteration. Don't be afraid to refine your prompts or build on its responses.

Weak Prompt: "Write a product description."

Strong Prompt: "Write a product description, then refine it to make it more concise and add a sense of urgency."

7. Set The Tone & Style: AI can adapt to different tones, styles or audiences if you specify them.

Weak Prompt: "Write a blog post."

Strong Prompt: "Write a blog post in a conversational tone, similar to how a lifestyle blogger would write, and make it engaging for millennials."

8. Leverage Context: Provide as much context as possible to help AI understand the task better.

Weak Prompt: "Write a marketing email."

Strong Prompt: "Write a marketing email for a new eco-friendly water bottle targeting environmentally conscious consumers. Include a discount offer and a call to action."

9. Experiment With Constraints: Adding constraints can lead to more creative and focused outputs.

Weak Prompt: "Write a tagline."

Strong Prompt: "Write a tagline for a luxury skincare brand in under six words."

10. Use AI For Learning & Skill

Development: AI can be a great teacher. Ask it to explain concepts or provide step-by-step guidance.

Weak: "Help me write better."

Strong: "Teach me how to write a compelling introduction for a blog post and provide examples."

(Note how it kept the same style I used in the previous five examples. But also, its answers weren't much different than the ones already provided — except the last example of asking AI to be a teacher. That wasn't covered before.)

A POTENTIALLY COSTLY "HALLUCINATION"

Recently, I was using the paid version Claude's iOS app to find potential influencers for a LASIK procedure. The influencers needed to be in the Midwest, and I refined them to be large influencers in the lifestyle and athletic space.

At first, it provided good examples of folks who it said wore glasses off-

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With just a few tweaks in learning how to speak to AI, the best results are just a well-written prompt away.

court or talked about wearing glasses/contacts while working out. But then it went rogue and gave me influencers that didn't exist.

When I told it I couldn't find one of the recommended influencers ("Michelle Fenelon") and to give me her social media links, the response was amusing: "I apologize for the error in my earlier analyses. You are correct to question this — I now realize I made a mistake in including 'Michelle Fenelon'/'That Midwest Girl' without being able to verify her existence or social media presence. This appears to be an error on my part where I may have conflated or fabricated information."

This is an example of a "hallucination" mentioned before. It is good to know asking the AI tool again for evaluation is an option to allow it to admit its mistakes.

Had I taken it at face value and given

the client this influencer who doesn't exist, it would have been an egg-on-the-face moment for me.

PARTING THOUGHTS

Overall, the more information and context provided to the AI tool, the better. This is also where using a paid version comes in handy, as it will learn your brand voice and style of writing. The more inputs given, the more AI tools can create complete works for you — from building blogs to books — all using your business voice and writing style.

The free versions can also produce this, but as a society, we're learning what content is coming from AI and what is written (or designed) in an authentic, human voice. (Like this article!) As an example, many are dissing LinkedIn posts written in AI as being gibberish and lacking value.

Furthermore, LinkedIn's algorithms tend to deprioritize AI-generated posts, which receive 30% less reach and 55% less engagement, as noted in this recent article.² Yes, use AI, but always double-check the results. Don't just "copy and paste," but add your style to the blog, post or article. **SI**

Footnotes:

1A. shootingindustry.com/discover/how-ai-can-help-your-business

1B. shootingindustry.com/discover/the-year-of-technology
2. cybernews.com/ai-news/ai-posts-failing-linkedin



A REPEAT
PERFORMANCE?

By Hank Yacek

WHETHER IT'S A "TRUMP SLUMP 2.0" OR "TRUMP JUMP" DEPENDS ON YOU

For those of us who were in the industry back during the 2016 election year, it was quite the rocky ride. Business was *good*. Gun control was a leading topic on the campaign trail — creating tremendous uncertainty about what the landscape

of firearm legislation would look like for the next four years.

At the time, most existing shops bet big (and I mean *big*, in some cases) — with owners ordering two, three and even four times their normal inventory amounts. These decisions were made with the single-minded certainty gun sales would be fast and furious, and it was the time to

secure inventory and take advantage of an opportunity to make their retirement in one year.

And then election night happened, and amid all the energy and celebration of the moment that — by some miracle — Donald Trump had won the election, a looming storm cloud on the horizon was largely ignored. This storm cloud became known as the “Trump Slump.”

WHEN A WAGER BACKFIRES

Sales volumes plummeted as the buying public felt safe knowing President Trump was highly unlikely to endorse any legislation that would negatively impact citizens’ rights to own and purchase firearms.

Quickly, the industry started to choke on extremes of excess inventory. Manufacturers, distributors, vendors of all types and retailers were all drowning in excess inventory and cash flows came to a screeching halt. As is always the case in this environment, someone eventually cracked due to the desperate need to have cash that outweighed their need for inventory, and prices started to drop.

Guns, accessories and even ammunition hit all-time lows (when adjusted for inflation). Businesses struggled to stay

afloat, distributors went bankrupt and manufacturers shuttered their doors — all as the consequences of an unexpectedly slow sales environment unfolded.

This “slump” persisted 2017 through 2019 and was only alleviated by the surge in panic sales brought on by the confluence of a worldwide pandemic and periods of civil unrest in 2020.

So, yes, the first election of President Trump essentially brought about a very stagnant, price-crushing period in the firearm retail industry that many did not survive. It was rescued by unprecedented global and domestic issues.

Are we setting the stage for a repeat performance? Let’s examine.

ONCE BITTEN, TWICE SHY

We should start with an examination of the political climate going into and just after the 2024 election.

Firstly, gun control as a political hot topic during the election cycle was not on the radar — a drastic difference from 2016 — and it only got an occasional sound bite here and there out of seeming obligation by the Democratic Party. Things such as inflation, global conflict, the economy, climate change, election security, jobs and immigration ruled the news channels and social media outlets.

Because of this, there was no significant pent-up anxiety over “what would Harris do” should she get elected. The public and industry insiders had minimal concern about what the Harris presidency would bring to the table — at least for her first year in office.

Therefore, the 2024 industry climate did not adopt “build excessive inventory” as its core ethos, but instead fostered a “sit back and watch” production and purchasing environment. For those retailers who survived the original Trump Slump, their appetite to gamble on buying extra inventory “just in case” was generally tempered by a “once bitten, twice shy” mentality.

2024 VS. 2016

The next part of the equation to

form a picture of what Trump’s second term may bring for the industry is pre-election market conditions. Back in 2016, business was strong and lively — for several reasons noted above.

In contrast, the run-up to Election Day 2024 saw market conditions already in a slump. 2023 sales lagged behind sales figures for 2022, and this trend continued into 2024. Depending on the region and product category, year-over-year sales figures were down as much as 30% last year.

This market trajectory, spanning multiple years, further underscored a rationale of managing inventory positions to better reflect the market at hand and not gamble on a “what if” future. In tandem with this tight inventory planning, retailers were not placing inflated orders for future delivery. In fact, the supply chain was experiencing inventory back-building and distributors were already feeling the pain of being over-inventoried. As a result, manufacturers were not increasing production.

Success will be largely based on customer service rather than product availability.

MARKET HANGOVER

The last piece of the puzzle that will influence the next four years is the market hangover from the boom years during the pandemic. When you look at the typical capacity of the firearm industry to sell goods, the pandemic boosted the sales volume by roughly 35%.

Historically, market booms in our industry tend to create “buy into the future” consumers, where they buy multiple years’ worth of sales in a much shorter period — rather than creating increased market capacity.

Once the incentive for consumers to pre-purchase the goods they need abates, we have seen a correction in the market that creates a decline nearly identical in magnitude to that of the boom.

When we put a lens on the current market and utilize this same assumption, it bears out there is still a downward correction in sales dollar volume for 2025 of about 5% year over year. After this 5% correction, we may transition into a “flat to a slightly improving” market.

Rx FOR THE NEXT 4 YEARS

When we combine all the above factors, we can create a prescription for the next four years (assuming there is no global disruption or unpredictable civil unrest). The signs are plentiful we’re moving into a flat sales environment, both in unit volume and pricing.

Inventories will not foster a need for accelerated “race to the bottom” pricing due to relatively appropriate amounts of inventory already in the pipeline. This condition will also, unfortunately, see many businesses whose success was tied to the inflated sales volume of the pandemic years go out of business — which will funnel sales volume into the stores that persist.

Success will be largely based on customer service rather than product availability. For those able to pivot to the current market conditions, profitability will be centered around high levels of customer satisfaction, efficiency and vigilant attention to inventory management.

The next four years are full of opportunities for businesses that can take advantage of some of the most predictable market conditions we’ve seen in a decade. To do so, it means acting now, being persistent and making a change before you’re forced to.

If we insist on giving a name to the next four years, instead of “Trump Slump 2.0” let’s go with “Trump Jump” — as we’ll see thriving brands fundamentally altering how they do business. **SI**

Dealers, we invite you to weigh in — will we see a “Trump Slump 2.0” or are you making adjustments to facilitate a “Trump Jump?” Let us know: comments@shootingindustry.com.



BY PETER SUCIU

ON THE FIRING LINE

Taking Aim At The State Of Target & Competition Pistol Shooting

According to data from a 2022 NSSF study, more than 20 million Americans regularly participate in sport and target shooting. The firearms industry trade association also found U.S. consumers were spending \$16.9 billion

annually on sport/target shooting — and it supported more than 329,000 jobs across the country.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) further reported manufacturer excise taxes on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment have been used by state fish and wildlife agencies to support public access, hunter education, research and new facilities for target

shooters and hunters to hone their skills.

Additionally, the NRA currently sanctions more than 11,000 shooting tournaments and annually sponsors more than 10 national shooting championships. There are now activities for everyone, from novices to world-class competitors.

It would seem there is no shortage of opportunities for those interested in target shooting and even competitions. Yet, USFWS also noted the biggest challenge for new shooters and others looking to take part in

competitions is knowing where to get started. This is where the local gun shop and shooting range can help.

STATE OF TARGET SHOOTING AT THE SHOP COUNTER

Handgun sales overall have been on the decline since hitting a peak in 2020 during the pandemic and the run-up to the election. High-profile anti-police protests further drove sales. Yet, even at the time, industry analysts had predicted the surge in 2020 wasn't sustainable. The Biden administration's effort to impose gun control failed to have the same impact as the Obama administration from 2009 to 2017. President Donald Trump's return to the White House this year will likely tamp down calls from lawmakers for additional gun control measures, and since the election, the industry has been bracing for a "Trump Slump."

Some in retail are already seeing it.

"The size of the market has remained stable, if not reducing slightly at the moment," said Paul Abela, sales manager at Caswells Shooting Range in Mesa, Ariz. He added many customers believe Trump won't threaten the Second Amendment or gun rights in general.

As sales of firearms, notably handguns, for personal and home defense decline, the opportunity could be growing for competition and target shooting.

"Competition shooting remains popular and increasing," suggested Abela.

The Grand Canyon State — which is now very "purple," meaning it hasn't been solidly Republican or Democratic in recent election cycles — has seen significant growth with state shoots, regional and national competitions, as well as an increase in shooting clubs. Both the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Arizona Game & Fish offer target shooting opportunities for residents.

Michael Grossman, director of operations for The Hub, an Arizona three-store chain with locations in Lakeside, Mesa and Tucson, said the hunting market for handguns is almost non-existent, but he told *Shooting*

Industry target shooting handguns have stayed steady.

"We sell high-end pistols, along with rifles for the long range," said Grossman, who also noted the accessory market for target shooting has seen an uptick.

In other words, even the customer who may not be spending money on an additional firearm can still be a loyal one who returns to look for options to enhance their shooting experience.

SHOPS CAN DO MORE TO MOVE THE NEEDLE

What is notable about the firearms industry is that retail largely isn't



“Competition shooting remains popular and increasing.”

PAUL ABELA • SALES MANAGER
CASWELLS SHOOTING RANGE
MESA, ARIZ.

▲ Matt Wolff, a competitive shooter based in New York and sponsored by The Firing Pin, says dealers can help ease potential customers into this segment by dispelling the myth of price being a barrier to entry. "There are plenty of striker-fired guns available for under \$800, and I've seen great options: the Walter PPD, the CZ Shadow 2 and multiple choices in the S&W M&P line. All are more than adequate for competition," he noted.

Build It, And They'll Come

Hosting shooting leagues represents a proven revenue stream for ranges. Established shooting competition organizations such as the United States Practical Shooting Association (USPSA), International Defensive Pistol Association (IDPA), the Single Action Shooting Society (SASS), National Skeet Shooting Association (NSSA), GLOCK Sport Shooting Foundation (GSSF), SHOOT SIG — just a small sample size of many more — provide a natural tie-in to your community.

That said, however, the potential reach these league events have may surprise you. One recent example was shared with us by the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP). Earlier this year, the Torrington Gun Club in New Hartford, Conn., hosted CMP 900 Bullseye Matches at its indoor facility — attracting competitors from Vermont, Massachusetts and New York.

"As they say, 'If you build it, they will come.' It appears to be true — the word gets out, and they come," shared David Hyatt, Torrington Gun Club pistol director. "We started with only a few participants, and, with the support of the CMP and NJ Pistol, we are now on the map."

On the map, indeed. This year's event featured a surprise team that drove 9 hours from Fort Eustis — southeast of historic Williamsburg, Va. — to compete. For the vast majority of the team, it was their first Bullseye Match. To Hyatt's delight, they're now "hooked."

"When they were all in the club room as they were scoring the targets, I asked them all this question: 'Can you picture yourselves when you are in your 50s and 60s hanging out at the club with your teammates, drinking coffee, scoring targets, boasting about how your scores could have been a bit better if only ...?'"

"They all said, 'Absolutely,' and in my own mind, I'm confident with motivated soldiers like these folks, our shooting sports will be saved. These young soldiers will be the next generation when we get old and are not able to see the bullseye target at 50!"

Have a similar story to share? We'd love to hear from you: comments@shootingindustry.com.

the gateway to target and competition shooting — certainly not the way specialty running and ski shops can be in their respective markets. It is almost impossible to walk into a running store and not see flyers for races, and the same is true for shops catering to the winter sports.

Some retailers are trying to make this part of their focus, and it is already paying off.

"We have some friends who are big into competition shooting," said Tyler [last name withheld by request],

Even the customer who may not be spending money on an additional firearm can still be a loyal one who returns to look for options to enhance their shooting experience.

an associate at The Firing Pin based in Bergen, NY. "We are seeing them go all-in with double-action and single-action handguns."

Tyler told *Shooting Industry* Shadow Systems has gained in popularity with shooters, along with the CZ Shadow 2. The Firing Pin, which still sees self-defense as its biggest market, has seen steady growth in handguns for the competition market. This includes the double-stack 1911, more popularly known as the 2011. It continued to have strong momentum in 2024, and Tyler expected it to be the same in 2025.

He also explained the Empire State doesn't make it easy for those looking to do some target or competition shooting. Traveling with handguns in New York requires permits, and it is much harder for those out of state.

"In New York, it is hard because you can't even shoot a pistol without having a permit," Tyler added. "There is an 18-hour class to get the permit, and it adds to the cost."

Yet, despite those challenges, target and competition shooting is helping drive sales, and the shop is doing what it can to get the word out.

Other shops said the efforts to promote competition and target shooting may not have an immediate return on investment (ROI).

"We try, but to be honest, promoting and advertising are too much money these days," Grossman of The Hub explained. "We try to focus on us and the classes/products we offer to drive people's interest. It then promotes

target shooting and shooting with friends and training.”

A COMPETITION SHOOTER'S PERSPECTIVE

Competition shooters could be strong brand ambassadors for the industry from the local level and upward. Just as other sports see the importance of celebrity athletes, the shooting world is no different. This includes those at the local and regional level.

One such competition shooter is New York resident Matt Wolff, who is sponsored by The Firing Pin. He shared there is no shortage of opportunities, and thanks to the internet, it can be easy enough to find competitions right around the corner.

“Searches can be hyper-specific to a region, and this provides insight to clubs and events,” said Wolff, who also recommended shops get more involved.

“I wish shops would do more,” he noted. “Many of the guys at the counter don’t understand what is

As sales of firearms, notably handguns, for personal and home defense decline, the opportunity could be for competition and target shooting.

‘legal’ or not for a competition. A little education would help a lot.”

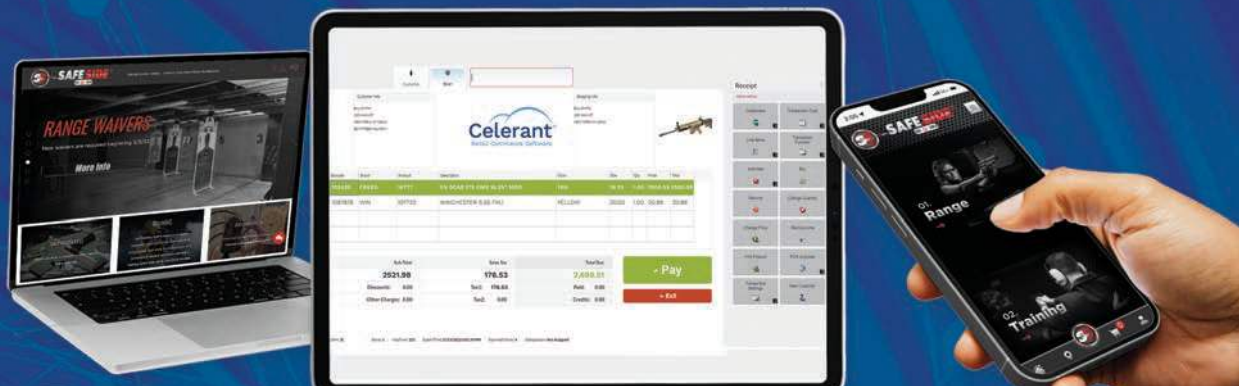
Unlike many other sports, competition shooting doesn’t require one to break the bank to get started.

“There are plenty of striker-fired guns available for under \$800, and I’ve seen great options, the Walter PPD, the CZ Shadow 2 and multiple choices in the M&P line. All are more than adequate for competition,” Wolff added. “There is a misconception you need to drop \$3,000 to get started, and that’s not the case at all. You just need to make sure the firearms fit into the criteria. You can get a feel for it and go from there.”

Though he also admitted the number of competition shooters is a drop in the proverbial bucket compared to the total number of shooters, it is a growing community.

“Most competitive shooters and clubs are super helpful and welcoming,” Wolff shared. “I hope shops will get more involved, but we’ll have to wait and see.” **\$1**

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By Tim Barker

GO LONG!

What Your Precision Customers Want

For most gun shops, sales of firearms and accessories revolve around handguns. It's what most customers are looking for, whether it's for self-defense, range fun or competitions.

Of course, "most" isn't the same thing as "all."

With a bit of effort — and a willingness to try something different — a shop can tap into these other interests, including the growing long-range/

precision rifle segment.

This isn't everyone's cup of tea. And these guns may be a tougher sell in geographical areas with no access to the kind of ranges needed to exploit the potential of rifles capable of reaching out 1,000 yards or more.

But there's a definite demand, contends Allen Bennett, owner of Full Circle Reloading & Firearms in St. Charles, Mo. The challenge, alone, is enough to spark curiosity in some customers.

"It's not super hard to hit a steel target



at 15 yards with a pistol,” noted Bennett, who also competes in precision rifle competitions. “But when people think about a 1,000-yard shot, it’s got a certain sex appeal.”

There’s the added bonus the segment is essentially immune to the panic-induced buying that can plague the handgun, shotgun and modern sporting rifle segments.

These guns — and all the accessories that go with them — also have a strong appeal to hunters, said Chad Converse, manager of Sprague’s Sports in Yuma, Ariz.

It’s what attracted Converse to the long-range game. It seemed like a practical way to make longer shots easier and extend his ability to give animals a clean, ethical death.

“Now, if I have a 300- or 400-yard shot, it actually seems more like a chip shot, where years ago it would seem kind of like a Hail Mary,” he shared.

To understand what sparked the upward trend in the market, Bennett points to the 2015 introduction of the Ruger Precision Rifle. This development brought precision rifles within easier reach of customers who wanted to get into long-range shooting — without having to jump through a lot of gunsmithing hoops.

“For the first time, they offered consumers a completely range-ready system and did it for a price that wouldn’t put you in sticker shock,”

Bennett noted. “Because Ruger changed the market so aggressively, everybody else was forced to innovate. Now everybody’s packing more precision, more accuracy, better triggers and more ergonomic stocks for less money than they did a decade ago.”

TOP RIFLES

As with higher-end handguns, prices can run north very quickly in the precision segment.

Sprague’s Sports offers higher-end models from Cadex Defense and Barrett Firearms — companies whose rifles can easily push \$5,000 and beyond. Full Circle provides the parts — from Straight Jacket Armory and Stuteville Precision, for example — needed for customers to assemble their own custom rifles in the \$3,500 range.

“We’re probably selling 25 to 30 custom rifles a year,” remarked Bennett, while noting that modern manufacturing allows customers to build these rifles with little or no gunsmith assistance.

“The tolerances on these modern actions are so tight we don’t actually have to send the action off to have a barrel cut to that action,” he said. “We can just order a barrel, spin it on, torque it down, check the headspace and we’re good to go.”

Not every customer is ready to build their own rifle or spend more than \$2,000 on one. Fortunately, both shops say there are lower-priced options — the Bergara B-14 HMR and Ruger’s Precision Rifle, for instance — that easily meet the needs of anyone interested in precision long-range shooting.

THE KEY IS BEING ABLE TO CONNECT WITH THE CUSTOMER TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH BETTER THINGS COULD BE.

Still, even then it can be a challenge to convince a customer about the value of these rifles.

“If you have a \$500 rifle and you’ve been hunting deer for 25 years, and you’ve never missed, why would you need more? When people find something they like it’s difficult to get them to change,” Bennett explained.

The key is being able to connect with the customer to help them understand how much better things could be.

Full Circle does this through introductory classes at the range and through the expertise of its sales staff, which is full of competitors in a range of disciplines. This helps customers realize what a modern precision rifle can do — compared to that trusty old \$500 deer gun.

“The difference in how that rifle system shoots is unbelievable,” Bennett stressed. “It’s not just accuracy. It’s the way it recoils and the way it tracks because the recoil impulse is so different.”

For anyone who’s followed long-range shooting over the past decade, the top caliber will come as no surprise, with 6.5 Creedmoor continuing its dominance. At Sprague’s, there’s still a decent amount of interest in the venerable .308 Winchester and 6.5 PRC. They’re also watching Federal’s new 7mm Backcountry, which may appeal to long-range hunters.

“It’s getting a lot of questions from the consumer side. And the industry is excited as well,” Converse observed.

THE ESSENTIALS

It’s hard to think of a shooting segment more reliant on accessories than this one. With most guns, there’s not a lot you need in order to enjoy a



Ruger Precision Rifle (Model Number: 18095)

trip to the range. Sure, it's nice to have a holster and a few extra mags for a new semi-auto, but you can get by with what's in the box.

This isn't the case if you buy a precision rifle and plan to use it for what it was built to do. Several accessories — some admittedly more important than others — will need to be part of that initial purchase.

The single most important element is the optic. With the easy availability of information via the internet, most of your customers will already know this won't be a minor expense.

Conventional wisdom says you should expect to spend about the same on the optic as you do on the rifle. But it comes down to what the customer hopes to do with the rifle, said Bennett.

If shooting prairie dogs is the goal, a top-of-the-line optic may not be needed, but when someone wants to shoot out to 1,000 yards, the quality of the glass will be critical.

"The optic is the single most important part of the system. I would rather see a \$3,000 optic on a \$500 rifle than a \$500 optic on a \$3,000 rifle," Bennett stated. "You can't hit what you can't see."

Full Circle does well with a range of optics, including the Vortex Viper HD (particularly popular with deer hunters), Leupold Mark 4 and Nightforce NX8.

Vortex and Leupold are also popular at Sprague's Sports. On the premium side, customers

like the offerings from Swarovski and its sister company Kahles.

Both shops employ the "good, better, best" approach when it comes to stocking optics. It guarantees any customer can find something in a price range they can be comfortable with.

"WITH THE ECONOMY, NOT EVERYONE HAS THE SAME MONEY TO THROW AT THESE TYPES OF GAMES. WITH TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURERS, YOU CAN STILL GET INTO SOME REALLY GOOD STUFF AT A LOWER PRICE POINT."

Chad Converse - Manager
Sprague's Sports
Yuma, Ariz.

"With the economy, not everyone has the same money to throw at these types of games," Converse said. "And with today's technology and manufacturers, you can still get into some really good stuff at a lower price point."

After choosing an optic, there are still several items on any precision shooter's shopping list. This

includes bipods, tripods, bubble levels, suppressors, spotting scopes, rangefinders, ballistics calculators and Kestrel weather meters.

MARKET OUTLOOK

With customer interest in long-range shooting on the rise, both shops are optimistic about the future of the segment. It helps so many quality manufacturers of rifles, optics and ammo make it easier for customers to get involved without a lot of fuss.

"It's a rewarding and gratifying feeling when you start hitting stuff at longer ranges than you thought were possible," Converse shared. "When you start doing it, it becomes almost

therapeutic."

It's also a way to alter your enjoyment of shooting. Consider how long it takes at the range to blow through \$80 worth of 9mm handgun ammo. Depending on the type of shooting you're doing, you might be done in half an hour.

The same amount of money spent on 6.5 Creedmoor for a day on a 1,000-yard range is quite a different pace.

"That could literally last you four or five hours on the range, shooting and calling shots with your buddies," Converse said. "It extends your day of shooting and enjoying your time with friends and family."

There are, however, some challenges. Chief



Chad Converse with a setup at Sprague's that would be the envy of just about any long-range customer: a Christensen Arms Modern Precision Rifle topped with a Leupold VX-5HD 4-20x52 scope and Gunwerks Elevate 2.0 bipod.

**“EVERYBODY’S
PACKING MORE
PRECISION,
MORE
ACCURACY,
BETTER TRIGGERS
AND MORE
ERGONOMIC
STOCKS FOR
LESS MONEY
THAN THEY DID A
DECADE AGO.”**

Allen Bennett • Owner
Full Circle Reloading & Firearms
St. Charles, Mo.

among them is the need for open spaces or shooting ranges offering the kind of distances that will challenge precision shooters. If your customers don’t have this kind of access, they’re far less likely to be interested in making the rifle and equipment investment.

Then there’s the economy. Bennett sees it as the biggest obstacle to serious growth.

“To get into quality stuff, it’s not inexpensive. Good scopes are expensive. Rifles are expensive. Range finders are expensive,” he acknowledged. “When you are in a market like right now, where everybody’s tight and inflation is high, people just aren’t spending money.” **\$1**



One way Allen Bennett has expanded sales to traditional customers — such as those who only want to hunt with the gun they’ve had for years — is through offering classes. He and his staff can showcase how modern precision rifles offer an enhanced and refined shooting experience.

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Branding Your 4 Walls & Beyond

By Doug VanderWoude

Are you making the most use of your brand? Of the almost

600 stores I have visited, the majority would do well to expand the use of their brand inside the four walls of their store. Is yours one of them?

Take a moment and walk into your store (through the customer entrance), take three steps in, stop and look around. Is it obvious what store you're in? (The signage on the entrance door doesn't count.)

Studies have shown customers walk fastest from the parking lot through the front door. Then, after taking a few steps in a store, they'll slow down to look around (well past the front door). Many stores put manufacturers' logos (or worse yet, banners) on the walls. If the manufacturers are not paying for that space, it'd be better to advertise your brand in these spots.

A STORE THAT "GETS IT"

One of my favorite stores for marketing is Black Wing Shooting Center in Delaware, Ohio. (Black Wing's Marketing Manager Kayla King really has this place dialed in.)

Walk through the front door

and the Black Wing logo with its mission statement is on two walls — one of them is so large they have guests take pictures of the wall. Besides logos in the retail store, Black Wing's indoor ranges have the facility's logos on walls and the range waiting area has another huge one on a wall.

King also hits apparel hard, commenting, "Our logo apparel is a marketing strategy for our brand and our business. We want it to be affordable and wearable with lots of options because those T-shirts, sweatshirts, candles and hats are all walking advertisements presented by your biggest fans!"

She continued, "When someone sees a Black Wing logo 'out in the wild,' it will sometimes spark conversation and friendship centered around our brand. When someone takes the initiative to buy a Black Wing logo item, it's the ultimate compliment because they look forward to wearing or displaying that item as a conversation piece — which is absolutely a key marketing strategy."

One of her keys to apparel sales is rotating and updating the styles. Having one style of hat or T-shirt doesn't cut it. Not only should branded apparel fit in with the upcoming season, but there should also be varieties of the item. Take the basic baseball cap. Some want a curved bill, others (which I don't understand) want a straight bill and others prefer trucker style. You need to offer choices and colors to spur sales. Black Wing offers many, many styles of hats, shirts, sweatshirts and jackets. (You could probably wear one a day for over a month before it repeats.)

I am a huge proponent of having a logo on as many items as possible. Although, my good friend Glenn Duncan, owner of Duncan's Outdoor Shop in Bay City, Mich., may have taken it a little too far. When my son, Grant, was born, Glenn made sure my baby came home from the hospital wearing

a Duncan's Outdoor Shop bib. To this day I think the kid likes Glenn better than me.

MAKE IT FUN

Are your giveaway logo items being used to their maximum potential? One way is to put some fun into them. For example, instead of just handing someone a free hat, let them win or earn it. To win one, allow the customer to "spin to win" on a wheel when they buy a gun or purchase a membership. The prizes on the wheel can be a hat, T-shirt, water bottle, etc. See a customer walking around the store wearing a national chain competitor's hat? Tell him you want him on your team and offer to trade him one of yours — and tease that his old hat will be used as a target.

“

We spend a lot of money on in-store signage; it's refreshed monthly.”

Todd Lockburner • Co-Owner
Magnum Shooting Center

Think about having different price points and varying quality of logo apparel. Giving away free apparel costs money unless of course, you're using co-op dollars (see Hank Yacek's article on co-op dollars in the Nov. 2023 issue of *SI*), so give away less-expensive items vs. higher-quality ones available for purchase.

Having your logo on eye and ear protection is natural, and not just for ranges. What better place to have others see a shooter

supporting your brand than when the consumer is actually participating in the activity (i.e., shooting)?

Offering ear protection for all shooters — including kids — in the latest colors with a logo will help move some product. And, please, not just pink for ladies — include purple or baby blue.

USE BRANDED ITEMS FOR CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Another idea for those with ranges: use logo eye/ear protection to create a package for local donations. I learned this trick after attending a Ducks Unlimited banquet where my donation was a gun rental, a box of 9mm ammo and range time. When it came time for my item, the auctioneer held up the little business card-sized range pass and mumbled what was in the package. Not very impressive.

Next banquet, we added eye/ear protection with our range logo and a large certificate printed on heavy paper. This time, the auctioneer held up the eye/ear protection and certificate and the package went for more than double the previous banquet.

In my experience, less than 25% of these packages are ever used. By including eye/ear protection, they're at least more likely to be used — even if it's just to wear while they mow the lawn.

ARE YOU OFFERING SHOOTERS' BUNDLES?

Speaking of packages and bundles, if your store or range does not offer shooters' bundles, I highly suggest starting. Ideally, more than one price point should be offered.

Shooter bundles typically consist of a range bag, eye/ear protection and a cleaning kit. Everything in that kit can have your logo on it. Pyramex, Radians, Pro Ears and Walker's all offer logo eye/ear items in a variety of styles and price points. Pro Shot and Otis offer cleaning kits with your logo. Bulldog can supply range bags with

a logo, too.

Besides working great for giveaways, logo eye/ear are perfect for any shooters' bundle. The beauty of these bundles is threefold.

First, they save time when staff is busy. As associates wrap up the firearm sale, they can inquire if the customer desires a good, better or best bundle — saving the time of selecting each item separately.

“

See a customer walking around the store wearing a national chain competitor's hat? Tell him you want him on your team and offer to trade him one of yours — and tease that his old hat will be used as a target.



Top: When customers enter Black Wing Shooting Center they *immediately* know where they are thanks to the store's impressive wall-length signage. (It is also a prominent selfie spot for social media mentions — money well spent.) **Bottom:** Likewise, a well-placed logo tells City Arsenal guests exactly where they're spending their time as they look down while reloading their firearm on the range.

Second is customer convenience: A newer shooter walking around your store may not know what they need, and can be too intimidated to ask for help. It sounds silly a consumer would be intimidated to ask for help, but think about going into a lingerie store to buy something for a lady. Would you be a little nervous — maybe even a little scared — to ask the salesperson for help? There are customers in your store all the time who feel the same way. Make it easy and take a little stress off them by offering shooters' bundles.

Third is all the marketing

benefits of having your logo on these items that are visible at the point of use. As mentioned above, cleaning kits are another awesome place for a logo. Not only do they look good on display in your store, but the real benefit is when the customer is cleaning their firearm at home — your logo is in their face while they're interacting with it.

WORTH THE EXTRA EFFORT

Branding starts outside. One of the best marketers I have run across is Magnum Shooting Center, with two locations in Colorado Springs, Colo. Magnum has a great

“
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 or range does
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 starting.**

logo (bright orange and black), which really stands out — and they use it to the maximum. In front of both facilities, customers are greeted with a massive circular entrance towering above

the roof and a large, brightly lit Magnum Shooting Center logo. Step into the range and the front wall of the range, behind the shooters, is used to promote memberships and products.

Todd Lockburner, co-owner of Magnum Shooting Center, said, “We spend a lot of money on in-store signage; it’s refreshed monthly.”

How many stores can say they have a program to refresh signage monthly? This is one of the processes to keeping your branding top-notch.

Lockburner uses OtterText to keep the brand in front of his customers. Earlier this year, he offered a free range pass to get people to sign up for the texting service.

FINAL THOUGHTS

If you own a range the opportunities are endless.

Consider adding logos on shooting benches — guests can’t miss it while handling their firearms.

City Arsenal in Greenville, S.C., just upgraded its range and added their logo to the new benchtops of the motorized shooting benches in each lane. Sprague’s Sports in Yuma, Ariz., did an awesome job using co-op dollars to place their logo and other brands on the floor forward of the firing line where shooters will see it, plus any pictures taken will have the logo.

A final comment on branding: All stores and ranges should have branded signage posted on the inside of bathroom doors for customers to see as they open the door to exit the restroom stating, “Don’t forget your firearm.” **SI**

Footnotes:

1. shootingindustry.com/discover/dont-cop-out-from-co-op-challenges

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BY NANCY KEATON

SECURE STORAGE

Retailers Can Be *The* Educational Resource For Sales

Long gone are the days when we could drive around with rifles in the back window of our pickup trucks. It's the world we live in now. People steal without a second thought. On top of that, with the increase in mental health struggles, we don't want our guns falling into the hands of someone who might use them on themselves.

While we wish it weren't so, it's up to all of us to keep our firearms out of

the wrong hands. How can retailers help their customers?

EDUCATING NEW GUN OWNERS

For new gun owners, the need to purchase a safe for storing their gun can be a surprise. They may not have considered this aspect of gun ownership. They may be so focused on finding the right gun and worrying about learning it and how to shoot it that they never even think beyond that part. So, as a retailer, you can help educate them.

Start by having a quick

conversation with each gun purchased. You likely already advise them to get eye/ear protection, so asking them if they need a gun safe is just a continuation of the conversation. If they haven't considered how they will store their gun when it's not being used, it's a great time to educate them about the various options.

GUN LOCKS

First, talk about the locks that now come with all guns. Let them know it's the first layer of safety but it doesn't keep the gun from being stolen. Sure, someone can't shoot it, but no one wants their property simply stolen, either.

GUN SAFES VS. GUN STORAGE

Gun safes run the gamut in size and price. A customer's first thought may be of the big long-gun safes, and they might immediately say they don't have room. But just because they might live in a small upstairs apartment, doesn't mean they can't store their guns in a safe.

Show them the wide variety of small safes that easily fit in any size of space they are living; in their closet, under their bed. Be mindful of covering ways to secure smaller safes so they can't be stolen.

Make sure to address the differences between something that will just store their guns but won't protect against fire and storage that is fire-rated to protect everything inside the safe from fire.

Finally, let them know if your state doesn't charge sales tax on safes, helping to make them more affordable. Everyone loves to save on sales tax.

VEHICLE STORAGE

Next, ask them if they have thought about storage in their car for transporting a firearm to the range or entering a facility that doesn't allow them. Again, they probably hadn't considered it, and if they did, they thought they could just put it in their glove compartment or console like they've seen on TV. This is another opportunity for further education, and not just gun safety.

For example, my husband and I first used a car safe when we traveled to California and learned we had to be very careful about how we carried in our car. We were surprised to discover we found the safe very useful, so we bought a second one for our other car. It could be used for any activity where our guns weren't allowed, but even where they were allowed, we could use it for something else.

If we wanted to go hiking but not take my purse, I could put my wallet in and lock it away. I don't believe in just locking a purse in the car because thieves know women do this and they'll simply break in to steal it.

As part of these educational conversations around storage, be sure to cover the pros and cons of simple key locks vs. combination locks vs. fingerprint locks vs. electronic locks. Some people worry an electronic lock won't work in the moment they need it.

A person's familiarity and trust of each option can make a difference in whether they feel comfortable using it on a regular basis, if at all.

INFORMATION FOR SEASONED GUN OWNERS

What if you have customers who already know they need a safe and are searching for a newer, better or larger safe? How can you help them? Again, be their resource. Make sure your staff is knowledgeable about the materials the safes are made of, which safes can meet which needs and fire-safety ratings.

One of the greatest ways to become the go-to store for safes is to produce educational material for your website. Many people like to do their research and will come into your store knowing exactly what they want. From exploring your website, they will know you carry or can quickly order what they want.



ONE OF THE GREATEST WAYS TO BECOME THE GO-TO STORE FOR SAFES IS TO PRODUCE EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL FOR YOUR WEBSITE.

"Most people come in already knowing what they want," said Aimee Webb of Therrell Lock & Safe Company in Waco, Texas. "They have done their research and don't really need much help from us except to see what we have in the store."

However, David Ballestrase, VP of Northwest Safe in Enumclaw, Wash., shared that he has a mix of customers coming in to peruse the shop's 200 unique safes, vault doors and gun safe accessories in its 18,000-sq.-ft. warehouse. Some customers already know what they want, and others seek out assistance.

But he also noted, "As we get better ourselves at creating content and writing articles and putting up videos,

we're getting more and more informed customers."

Helping customers establish a starting point is crucial, Ballestrase contends.

"I would say this industry is notorious for customers just not knowing where to start. A lot of times with big purchases such as vehicles or appliances, they have some experience and some kind of brand loyalty," he said. "But oftentimes with something like a residential safe, it's the first time someone in their family has made a purchase like that."

Consequently, customers are utilizing Northwest Safe's website and educational materials to learn more before coming into the store.

ADVICE FOR RETAILERS

When asked what advice he would give other retailers, Ballestrase said the "biggest thing" is people want to be informed.

"The market itself kind of sets the bar low. It seems like there's this race to the bottom of who can build the biggest, cheapest safe. When you go into Costco or Home Depot, they're not offering someone the full range of what's really available," he said. "They're offering something easy for their employees to move and something that can sell itself by price. Their goal is to reach a price point not a certain level of security and fire protection."

BECOME THE RESOURCE FOR SAFE STORAGE

We all want gun owners to know how to keep their guns safe and secure. New gun owners may not know to ask the questions yet, but retailers can guide them. Seasoned owners may know what they are looking for but want to see the latest and best innovations.

Retailers can take it further than just a conversation by ensuring their customers have the best information easily accessible on their website. By becoming the trusted resource for safe and secure storage, new customers will appreciate it and seasoned customers will return again and again as their needs change. **SI**

E-COMMERCE

The “E” In Elevating, Enhancing
& Expanding Your Business

BY JADE MOLDAE



Fresh off navigating Y2K, *Shooting Industry* readers were already learning about the added benefits of a strong e-commerce presence nearly 24 years ago.

In the August 2001 issue, *SI* columnist Ray Hurley interviewed Phil Reed, the late co-founder of shooters.com, who saw the early value of a store having online inventory. (While researching this topic, I learned Reed was instrumental in helping *SI*'s sister publication *GUNS Magazine* secure its first website in the late '90s.)

In the interview, Reed recounted what is now a ubiquitous scenario: “Say a customer comes in and wants to purchase a product you don’t carry in inventory. An unusual reloading die, for example. A dealer can say, ‘Let me check my online inventory for that.’

“With the customer beside him, he can pull the item up on his website, place it in the shopping cart and use the customer’s credit card to complete the transaction.

Done. He has a customer and the profit.”

This approach to sales was groundbreaking at the time. Not so today — of course — with customers armed with their smartphones to check inventory and compare pricing. This makes having a responsive, user-friendly website with live inventory a must for storefront dealers.

Eric Wille, VP of business development for Gunstores.com, observed too many stores are missing out on sales because of a flawed website.

“Even when dealers have a website, they’re often not promoting it or optimizing it for SEO, so they’re not getting much traffic. And when they do get traffic, they don’t always know what to do with it,” he said.

We asked several providers and dealers to share their “best tips” to secure additional e-commerce sales. If your store checks all the boxes, that’s great! Look for new ways to expand the online component of your business. If you’re missing a couple, consider tweaking your approach. In today’s soft market, every sale matters.

1. THE “ENDLESS AISLE”

The “endless aisle” isn’t a new concept in the e-commerce space. It is still, however, a valuable one and can add to your store’s profits.

Michele Salerno, Celerant Technology's chief growth officer, shared the intrinsic benefits of the endless aisle.

"Dealers can massively expand their product offerings without stocking more inventory by integrating distributor product feeds," she said. "This enables drop-shipping directly to customers [or local FFLs], creating an 'endless aisle' of available products. More selection equals more sales."



A simple system that connects online shopping with the in-store experience can drive more sales and keep customers coming back. If your e-commerce site isn't making it easy for customers, you're leaving money on the table."

Erin Crooks • Marketing Director
Freedom Outdoors • Virginia Beach, Va.

At Vandalia Range & Armory in Vandalia, Ohio, Co-Owner Alex Hague explained why his store has partnered with distributors to expand viewable inventory.

"Our website is integrated with our distributors, allowing it to function as an extension of our physical store," he stated. "The inventory displayed includes everything available from our distributors, though it doesn't always reflect what we have in stock at the store."

As Hague noted, not every product included on the site is available in the store, but the listing alone will create

opportunity.

"We can also add our own inventory, but the main goal is to expand product offerings and show customers what's available to order beyond what we carry on-site," he said. "Since demand is relatively steady, this setup makes it easy to fulfill customer orders efficiently."

Drop-shipping — highlighted by Salerno above — represents another significant advantage for those stores with an integrated website.

"With this capability, we can ship certain products directly from the distributor to the customer, reducing costs and eliminating the need to hold extra inventory," Hague said. "This approach worked well for us instead of making a large investment in a custom-built platform that only displays in-store stock."

2. MERGING THE ONLINE & IN-STORE EXPERIENCE

Erin Crooks, the marketing director for Freedom Outdoors (which has four locations across two states), shared successful stores are able to blend the online and in-store experience.

"A simple system that connects online shopping with the in-store experience can drive more sales and keep customers coming back," she said. "If your e-commerce site isn't making it easy for customers, you're leaving money on the table."

With so much competition, "convenience" is often a determining factor in customer loyalty.

"Customers want convenience — like knowing what's in stock, ordering online for quick pick up and knowing they can pick it up right away," Crooks noted.

Labeling the above as the "Target experience" (Target's approach to omnichannel shopping), Crooks added an online chat is another useful feature for guests.

"They also want fast answers for their questions with an online live chat that would match their experience if they were speaking to a sales associate on the sales floor of

your gun store," she said.

Freedom Outdoors recently added its fourth location, acquiring Colonial Shooting Academy in Richmond, Va. Serving customers in four locations offers its own set of challenges, and Crooks shared how her team is meeting them.

"The new offering we're building out right now is the ability for a customer to shop online at any of our stores in one experience, and being able to fill orders from any store in one order," she said. "That way, if an item is out of stock in one location, but available in another, the customer can purchase it in one checkout experience."

3. CONSISTENCY & ACCURACY

Relating to the above point, another way to make the in-store vs. online experience seamless is consistency. To that end, Wille contends in-store prices and inventory should match what you're displaying online.

"If a dealer's website isn't synched with their POS, customers see different prices online than in-store, which causes confusion and lost sales," he said.

Instant gratification is central to a customer's motivation to walk into a store for a particular product. Wille and his team work with dealers to ensure it's clear to the customer whether or not a product is physically available in-store when they search for it.

"Customers want to know what's actually in stock at the shop, not just what could be ordered," Wille said. "That's something we focus on heavily at Gunstores.com — giving dealers the tools to make their online presence work for them, all without having to build or manage a complex e-commerce site on their own."

4. ACCESS TO A NATIONAL AUDIENCE

To say GunBroker.com has "experience" as an online marketplace

Continued on p. 45

NEW PRODUCTS

TO VIEW HUNDREDS OF PRODUCTS
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By Jenna Buckley



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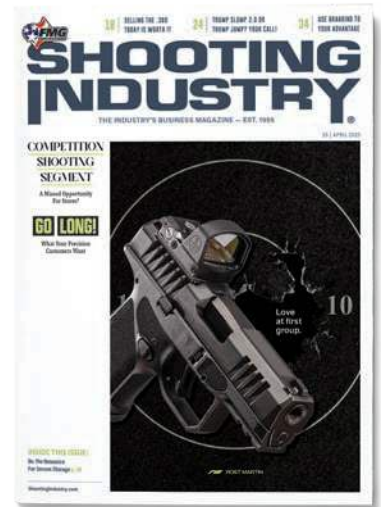
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federalpremium.com

Federal's **MASTER CLASS** competition-level sporting clay load features two top-tier components: a one-piece Podium wad and high-antimony lead shot that balances hardness and density. It's constructed with a straight-wall hull, inserted plastic base wad and striated tube for optimum performance. Master Class is offered in six 12-GA options: 7.5 shot, 2.75", 1,250 fps; 8 shot, 2.75", 1,250; 7.5 shot, 2.75", 1,235 fps; 8 shot 2.75", 1,235 fps; 7.5 shot, 2.75", 1,300 fps; and 8 shot, 2.75", 1,300 fps.



CZ-USA

(800) 955-4486
cz-usa.com

Boasting competition-ready features such as adjustable sights, an ability to attach frame weights, an adjustable trigger shoe and a longer barrel, the **CZ SHADOW 2 TARGET** is a unique model customized for bull's-eye shooters. An enlarged undercut on the trigger guard allows for a higher grip, and longer and deeper cocking serrations provide a more secure grip. Sophisticated grip texturing matches the roughened areas on the front and rear of the grip and the redesigned shape of the controls enhances ease of use. The CZ Shadow 2 Target chambered in 9mm has a 17-round magazine capacity and weighs 45.3 oz.

LEICA SPORTS OPTICS

(800) 222-0118
leica-camera.com

Leica **FORTIS GLOSSY** riflescopes are polished by hand to produce a unique shine that matches the glossy bluing of classic firearms. Standout features include a compact and slim design, 6X zoom, extra-large exit pupil, high light transmission of 92%, wide field of view, generous eye relief, precision engineering, rugged material construction, particularly fine reticle illumination, auto-on and auto-off for reticle illumination and ideal for use with Leica Calinox 2 Sight and Sight SE. Three models are available: 1-6x24i, 1.8-12x42i and 2-12x50i.



Continued from p. 41

would be an understatement. Last year, the company celebrated its 25th anniversary. Several months before, it marked its one-billionth listing.

Given its vast network of buyers and sellers, posting inventory on GunBroker.com provides instant access to a national audience.

While this article is focused on e-commerce, it's important to note: GunBroker is not an e-commerce platform; rather, it's an online marketplace to give your store another way to reach customers.

According to Jay Zwitter, GunBroker VP of sales and customer service, there are multiple ways to earn profits as a store that partners with GunBroker.

"We're going to give you several ways to make money: list your product, sell your product, turn your inventory quickly. Or if you want to be an FFL transfer dealer, you can make a couple bucks doing a transfer and we have the marketplace for you to get some foot traffic coming in — which gives you the back end of that sale. You have the ability to sell accessories or whatever else you want in that world. And that's GunBroker being your partner," he said.

A number of prominent storefront dealers maintain robust "stores" on GunBroker.com, such as Fuquay Gun, Green Top, Dury's Guns, Simmons Sporting Goods and Generational Guns. If they're doing it, and having success, it's certainly worth considering, too.

5. PERSONALIZATION COUNTS

A variety of sources agree the average person, especially in a professional setting, receives 121 emails a day. There's a challenge here for marketers: What can you do to have your email stand out amidst so much competition?

Salerno advised a tailored approach — such as segmenting a mailing list — would yield better results than a one-size-fits-all email to every subscriber.

"Mass emails to your entire customer base just don't work," she said. "Personalized email marketing, triggered by POS and e-commerce data, can be six times more effective."

A fully integrated system — such as those supplied by Celerant and other providers — offers built-in functions to compete with Constant Contact and Mailchimp. Salerno shared successful stores are good at sending automated emails based on customer behavior — such as upsells after a purchase, abandoned cart reminders and product review requests.



Order confirmation and shipping update emails and texts get more than 80% open rates — higher than any other marketing message! Dealers who aren't using this real estate to promote special offers or personalized messages are leaving easy revenue on the table."

Michele Salerno - Chief Growth Officer
Celerant Technology

"No manual exports. No Excel. Just smarter marketing," she added.

In a similar vein, Wille from Gunstores.com noted these follow-ups represent "easy wins" that dealers often don't take advantage of.

"A lot of dealers aren't using email or text marketing to engage customers, and abandoned cart follow-ups are practically nonexistent, even though they're easy wins," he said.

6. ORDER NOTIFICATIONS

Customers today are accustomed to receiving order notifications after a purchase. (Even for small purchases at my local Home Depot, I'll receive an order confirmation, then another once it's shipped and a third email once it arrives either at my house or in-store. That's three "touch points" — and, as a consumer, I don't think anything of it.)

This is common for many of your customers, and a very effective way to stay top of mind. Salerno shared some eye-popping statistics.

"Order confirmation and shipping update emails and texts get more than 80% open rates — higher than any other marketing message! Dealers who aren't using this real estate to promote special offers or personalized messages are leaving easy revenue on the table," she said.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

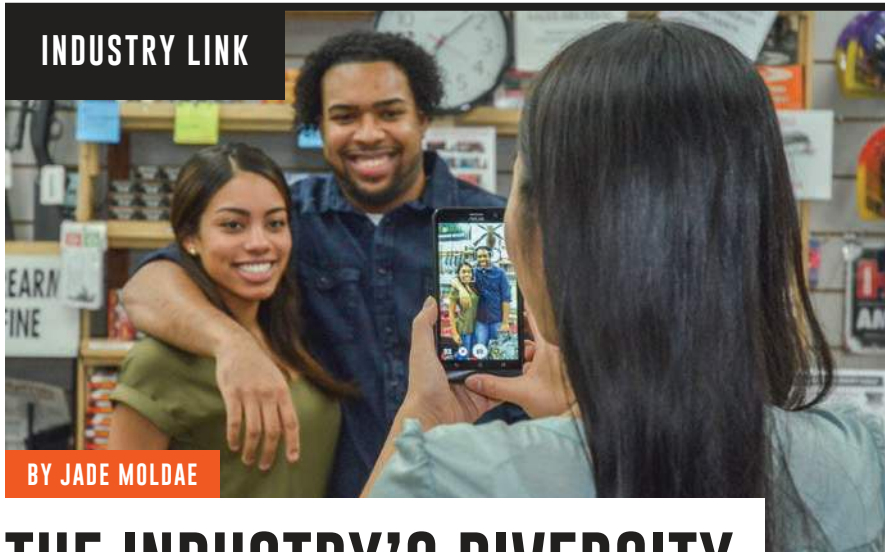
Managing an FFL with a storefront today is a multi-faceted endeavor. Maximizing capability inside your store's four walls, while also managing an e-commerce enterprise, is not for the faint of heart.

If you have a member on your team who is tech-savvy, this would be a perfect opportunity for them to enhance their value — and getting their help to grow your e-commerce business would prove mutually beneficial. Creating an integrated platform, or partnering with an existing provider, is an excellent place to start.

"Every business is different, so it's important to choose a system that fits your goals. If your focus is solely online sales or if e-commerce is a major part of your business, investing in a more customized platform may be the right move. It all depends on your specific needs and long-term strategy," Hague advised.

Salerno shared her "bottom line" takeaway on why an integrated e-commerce system is beneficial.

"Firearms dealers can increase sales, reduce risk and streamline operations — without adding extra workload," she concluded. **SI**



BY JADE MOLDAE

THE INDUSTRY'S DIVERSITY IS GETTING RECOGNIZED

Early March, I received the following email from Hank Yacek, a frequent *SI* contributor (including in this issue) and respected retail consultant with decades of experience in our industry: “I can’t believe I’m linking this, but did you see the recent *New York Times* article below?”

The article in question — “The New American Gun Store: Grips, Grenade Launchers and Ramen Noodles” — was published on March 1 and was written by Thomas Gibbons-Neff. It profiled a new group of retailers and companies that are profiting from limited-edition accessories and have also excelled at promoting the gun-owning lifestyle to women and minorities.

It’s more of a “neutral” read, but — notably — it doesn’t lambaste gun ownership. Rather, it focused on our industry’s continued advancement into non-traditional audiences through “drop culture” (a marketing strategy where brands release products in limited quantities to create a sense of exclusivity and desirability). This has led to a profitable revenue stream for stores and companies alike, outside the sale of firearms.

Gibbons-Neff posits this shift was a natural “evolution,” mirroring iconic sneaker and fashion brands.

“In an increasingly polarized nation, gun ownership in America has transformed into more of a lifestyle than a hobby or policy position,” he said.

This falls in line with what I wrote

about in this column in last month’s issue: Barring a black swan event, the move from self-defense and fear-based buying to sport shooting is going to be crucial for our industry over the next four years.

“FACES OF FIREARMS” CAMPAIGN

In a second surprising article from the *NYT*, published in February, the motivations of new gun owners were explored in “They Never Planned On Buying A Gun. Until They Did.”

This story was called out in NSSF’s weekly “First Shots” e-newsletter, with the following commentary: “The *New York Times* published a rare and honest look at the growing number of new, first-time gun owners and found that not only do Americans value gun ownership but that many of the recent new gun owners are breaking stale stereotypes.”

To that end, NSSF has been doing its part to highlight the “most diverse gun-owning community in history” with its Faces of Firearms campaign, which launched in January.

“This campaign challenges the stereotypes often portrayed by those who oppose lawful firearm ownership to show America who gun owners really are,” said Joe Bartozzi, NSSF president and CEO. “Today’s gun owners are representative of America because they come from every part of American society. We don’t all look the same or talk the same, but we share the very important idea that safe and lawful

◀ A new, free NSSF R3 toolkit has given dealers a fresh way to connect with Black Americans — a surging demographic. (Image: NSSF)

firearm ownership is our right.”

Some of the featured gun owners in this campaign are domestic violence survivors, Stop Asian Hate advocates, retailers, community leaders and Olympians.

More info can be found here: facesoffirearms.org.

NEW R3 TOOLKIT

Another way NSSF is putting its words into action is through the recent release of a “Black American Gun Owners” report and R3 communications toolkit.

Through a Multi-State Conservation Grant, the NSSF along with project partners from Responsive Management, JMI, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and the National African American Gun Association worked collaboratively to develop a toolkit designed to drive growth, create pathways for involvement and provide the industry with practical tools and resources to communicate with this burgeoning group.

“Our overall goal was to encourage an increase in Black Americans’ participation in R3 programs in general and shooting sports, specifically. We believe to ensure this, the initial experiences with a firearm should be positive. Prior to this project, there was a dearth of messages and images that focus on the unique motivations that drive Black Americans to buy firearms and engage in sport shooting,” stated George P. Braxton, chief diversity and inclusion officer for the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

The toolkit features a 294-page research report that details survey and focus group findings (as well as a condensed version), and a portal with templated marketing and advertising assets that can be customized with logos for use in digital and print campaigns. It’s available at: tinyurl.com/nssf-r3-toolkit.

Have you noticed the continued growth in non-traditional markets? What messaging has been effective? Share your thoughts so they can be published for your peers: editor@shootingindustry.com. 📧

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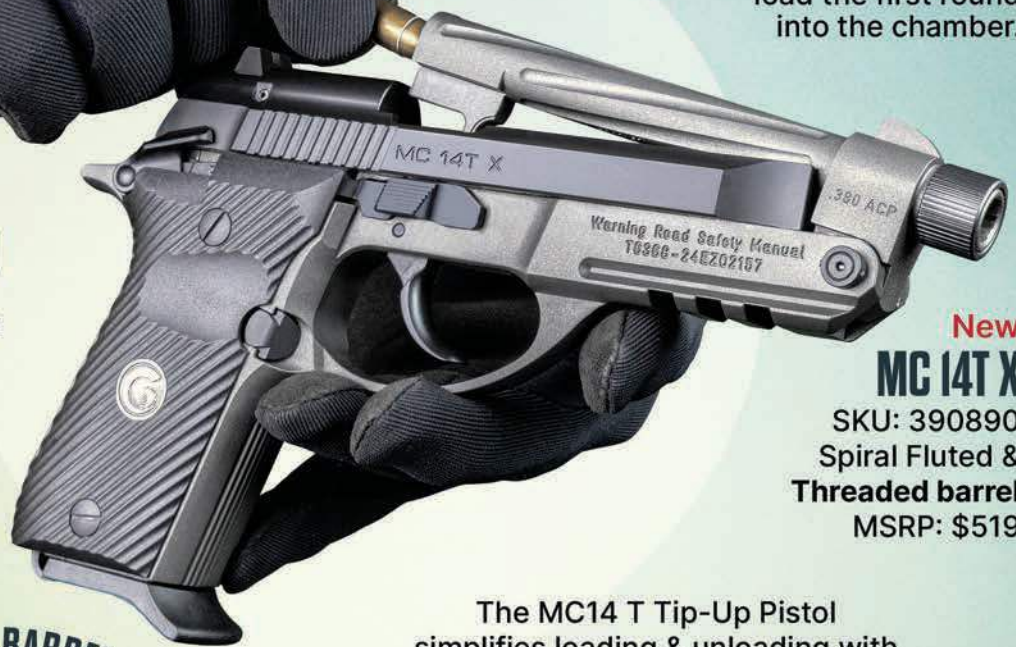
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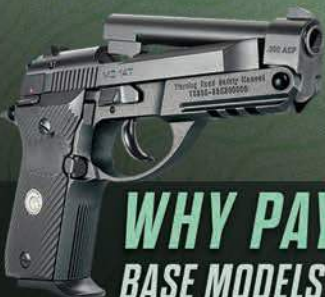
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