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Casting A Wider Net

Slower periods — like the one we're experiencing now — enable innovative minds to rise to the top. Regular *SI* contributor and experienced retail guru Hank Yacek challenges dealers to look “beyond the gun rack” to generate new sales opportunities.

“Industry-adjacent” categories to firearms — such as archery, watches, precious metals, food-prep tools, knives/cutlery, fishing, etc. — provide fresh markets for dealers to meet.

“Sometimes, we must adjust where those profits are sourced from. Stop thinking of your shop as a gun shop, and think more of it as a lifestyle facility,” Yacek says. “Everything from there becomes a whole lot easier to dynamically adjust to market conditions.”

For more insights on “casting a wider net” see Yacek's feature on **p. 24**.

Have feedback on this article or anything you see in *Shooting Industry*? We'd love to hear from you, truly: editor@shootingindustry.com.

WOMEN OF THE GUN

Inside this month's *Arms & The Woman* column, Carolee Anita Boyles looks back on how the perception of women in the industry has changed. She interviews three women who have decades of combined experience, and helped trailblaze the path ahead for others to follow: Linda Powell, Sherry Kerr and Becky Bowen.

“It's been an incredible journey for me, and I am so thankful for the opportunities,” Powell shared. “My life has changed in ways I never envisioned and that's all due to this industry and the opportunities it's given me.”

Boyles' column is both eye-opening and encouraging. Our industry has come a long way, but still has room for improvement in how it welcomes and caters to women.

See **p. 20**.



JUNE 2025

NEXT-GEN SELF-DEFENSE TRAINING

Firearms training has undergone a dramatic transformation in recent years. Today's shooters demand smarter, more effective and accessible ways to build their skills. Technology answers the call, contends Ashley McGee in “Next-Gen Self-Defense Training” starting on **p. 26**.

McGee looks at the evolution of dry-fire systems, gamification's role in boosting retention, the red dot revolution and how ranges are adapting and innovating to meet demand.

NEXT MONTH: FIREARMS REPORT!

The July issue has (arguably) *Shooting Industry's* most popular story of the year — the “U.S. Firearms Industry Today” report. This annual reader favorite takes a deep dive into the ATF's 2023 Annual Firearms Manufacturing and Export Report (AFMER) — the latest data available — and presents it in a user-friendly format.

The top 40 U.S. manufacturers will be revealed, as well as a category-by-category breakdown of production trends for pistols, revolvers, rifles, shotguns and exports. Additionally, the report will use data from the U.S. Census Bureau to categorize import trends for 2023 and 2024.

Other points of interest in the July issue include a look at the gun-care segment, sporting shotguns, bowhunting and a data-driven “hot or not” report on what's moving at retail. **SI**

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IF IN “TRUMP SLUMP,” REENGAGEMENT IS KEY

Editor's Note: The following is courtesy of NASGW Chairman Bill Sumner, who shared his reaction to Hank Yacek's recent feature (“A Repeat Performance?”; April 2025) with subscribers of NASGW's biweekly InSight Newsletter disseminated in early April. Have a further reaction to share with us? Send feedback to editor@shootingindustry.com. — **Jade Moldae, S/ Editor**

As we get deeper into 2025, we are all grappling to understand the market and strategies to improve sales.

FMG Publications recently released a good article, “A Repeat Performance” written by Hank Yacek. For those of you who haven't had the opportunity to dig in, it's worth a read.

Hank does a great job of comparing 2024 vs. 2016, as well as discussing our post-pandemic lull — or “market hangover” as Hank calls it.

One thing I'd add to his optimistic “Next 4 Years” outlook, would be the addition of 26.2 million new gun owners since 2020. Early on, I was privy to some standalone reengagement campaigns

by manufacturers and a few savvy retailers, but most movements have fizzled or never gained enough support to justify the spend.

So, if we are truly headed toward a Trump Slump 2.0 (or “TS2” as I call it), let's not ditch our own R3 campaigns, but in addition, start some collective conversations to change our destiny by reactivating our biggest opportunity.

Perhaps, this could be a future topic of discussion at our upcoming summer Wholesaler Summit. We'll have more on that in the coming months.

— **Bill Sumner, Chairman**
NASGW

PRAISE FOR “WHY ‘SHRINK IT & PINK IT’ DOESN'T WORK”

Editor's Note: Annette Evans' recent article in *Arms & The Woman* (“Why ‘Shrink It & Pink It’ Doesn't Work,” March 2025) caught the attention of the team at Langdon Tactical. The following is an exchange from Instagram, used with permission. Have a further comment? Send us a note anytime: editor@shootingindustry.com. — **Jade Moldae, S/ Editor**

If we are truly headed toward a Trump Slump 2.0, let's not ditch our own R3 campaigns, but in addition, start some collective conversations to change our destiny by reactivating our biggest opportunity.

We recently came across a great write-up in *Shooting Industry* titled “Why ‘Shrink It & Pink It’ Doesn't Work” — and it really hits the mark. The article sheds light on what many manufacturers continue to get wrong when it comes to designing for women.

At Langdon Tactical, we've never subscribed to that approach — because it doesn't reflect who we are or what we stand for. Our focus has always been on performance, usability and real-world reliability.

Our firearms aren't flashy for the sake of being flashy — they're upgraded where it counts, and built for those who want confidence in every shot.

Yes, our products are premium — but that doesn't mean they need to break the bank. We believe you can (and should) have a top-tier experience without starting at \$2,000. That's not our style, and it's not what we offer.

— **Langdon Tactical (@ltddiscover)**

Neat! That's my article! Thanks for the feedback about it hitting the mark. **SI**

— **Annette Evans**

HAVE A THOUGHT WHILE READING THE ISSUE?

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



OLIN – WINCHESTER COMPLETES AMMO INC. ACQUISITION

Olin Corp. has completed its previously announced acquisition of the small-caliber ammunition assets of AMMO Inc.

The assets, employees and ammunition business are now part of Olin's Winchester Ammunition business, including the brass shell-case capabilities and a newly constructed, world-class, 185,000-sq. ft. production facility located in Manitowoc, Wis.

The facility and its skilled employees complement Winchester's existing production capabilities, enabling greater specialization and broader participation across a variety of high-margin, specialty calibers.

Funded from available liquidity, the transaction is expected to be immediately

accretive to Olin's shareholders, delivering incremental expected first-year adjusted EBITDA of \$10 to \$15 million, including synergies realization.

The acquisition leverages Winchester's industry-leading economies of scale, raw material sourcing and projectile, primer and loading capabilities. Once fully integrated, this acquisition is expected to yield an adjusted EBITDA of \$40 million per year with full realization of synergies.

"During our recent Investor Day, we committed to our capital allocation framework. Like the White Flyer acquisition in 2023, this acquisition furthers our Winchester strategy to identify and secure small, bolt-on opportunities that are highly strategic

◀ This 185,000 sq. ft. production facility in Manitowoc, Wis., was included in Olin–Winchester's acquisition of AMMO Inc. (Image: AMMO Inc.)

and immediately accretive to Olin. By year three, we expect to have paid one and a half times adjusted EBITDA for these world-class assets," said Olin President and CEO Ken Lane.

“

Like the White Flyer acquisition in 2023, this acquisition furthers our Winchester strategy to identify and secure small, bolt-on opportunities that are highly strategic and immediately accretive to Olin."

Ken Lane • President & CEO
Olin Corp.

"The specialization of the Manitowoc facility will expand our reach into higher-value commercial, as well as international military and law enforcement calibers, while deepening our near-full integration across the ammunition value chain. This shift enables our larger legacy plants to focus on high-volume products and growing our cost advantage," said Brett Flaughter, president of Winchester Ammunition.
[/ olin.com](http://olin.com)

SMITH & WESSON EARNS WASHINGTON STATE PATROL RIFLE CONTRACT

Smith & Wesson Brands Inc. announced it was awarded a firearm contract from the Washington State Patrol to transition the agency to M&P patrol rifles.

"In my opinion, there was no other place to look than the one manufacturer who has protected our beloved troopers

for over 100 years ... (and) made it a mission to provide law enforcement with the most dependable and reliable firearms in the industry," said Spike Unruh, president of the Washington State Patrol Trooper's Association.

Smith & Wesson's M&P handguns and rifles are crafted to withstand the challenging conditions faced daily by L.E. professionals. The company has a long, proven track record that exemplifies the reliability and effectiveness of its firearms in critical situations.

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"Smith & Wesson takes pride in continuing a long-standing tradition of partnership with the Washington State Patrol, which spans many decades. Their ongoing use of our products, along with their inherent trust in our brand and after-sales support, stands as the highest form of endorsement," said Mark Smith, president and CEO of Smith & Wesson.
[/ smith-wesson.com](http://smith-wesson.com)

BARRETT ANNOUNCES MRAD CONTRACT WITH COLOMBIAN NATIONAL ARMY

Barrett Firearms Manufacturing Inc. announced the Colombian National Army has awarded the company its largest-ever international military contract for the acquisition of the MRAD (Multi-Role Adaptive Design) sniper rifle and AM338 suppressors. The contract includes MRAD rifles chambered in 7.62x51mm and .338 Lapua Magnum, paired with the AM338 Suppressor and Leupold Mark 5HD optics. Deliveries of the systems are scheduled to begin this summer.

This adoption marks a pivotal step in the Colombian military's efforts to standardize its precision rifle systems with a modular, multi-caliber, modern solution. Barrett's MRAD rifles were selected following their proven success in special forces and army deployments worldwide, having earned a reputation for unparalleled performance and adaptability.



Barrett MRAD Rifle - OD Green (Leupold Mark 5HD Optic)

"This collaboration is a monumental moment for us, as this contract sets our record for the largest single acquisition of MRAD systems from any international military end user to date. We look forward to reinforcing our already successful relationship with the Colombian military, and we anticipate overwhelming success and growth together," said Cooper Thompson, Barrett's director of international sales.

This milestone reflects Barrett's ongoing commitment to supporting international defense forces and expanding its presence internationally. The adoption of the MRAD platform will enhance the Colombian National Army's capabilities, providing state-of-the-art

precision and modularity to meet the demands of modern military operations.

Barrett designs and manufactures long-range, large-caliber, precision rifles that are known worldwide. Barrett products are used by civilians, sport shooters, law enforcement agencies, the U.S. military and more than 80 U.S. Department of State-approved countries around the world.

The Barrett Quality Management System has received the prestigious ISO 9001:2015 certification for the design and manufacture of firearms, ammunition and accessories, and to provide training for those systems. Barrett is part of the NIOA Group.

[/ barrett.net](http://barrett.net)

SELLMARK BREAKS GROUND ON VERDEXIUM BUSINESS AND INNOVATION CENTER

Sellmark Corp. held a groundbreaking ceremony on April 21 at the Mansfield, Texas home of its Verdexium business and innovation center.

The state-of-the-art center is the latest venture by Sellmark, and is designed to spark creativity, collaboration and economic growth in the region. With the tagline, "Where Ideas Become Reality," Verdexium will offer over 140,000 sq. ft. of premier space for offices, production, robotics and community events.

The facility will also feature the Verdexium Fusion Museum of Art, Science and Engineering, a one-of-a-kind space blending technology and imagination to inspire visitors of all ages.

"Verdexium is a reflection of our commitment to building lasting value for Mansfield. We've designed this space to support innovators, builders and creators



Sellmark Corp. executives and local leaders commemorate the groundbreaking of the Verdexium business and innovation center, which is slated to open early next year in Mansfield, Texas.

who want to make an impact. Here at Sellmark, we believe in giving people the tools and environment they need to do meaningful work and build something that matters," said James Sellers, CEO of Sellmark Corp.

The groundbreaking event included remarks from Mansfield Mayor Michael Evans and other city leaders, as well as

Sellmark executives and community stakeholders. Also in attendance was Texas State Rep. David Cook. Attendees were invited to tour the site, network with industry professionals and get a first look at renderings of the completed facility, slated to open in early 2026.

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



CELERANT, TGD ANNOUNCE DROP-SHIPPING OPTION

Celerant Technology announced it is expanding its integration with Tactical Gear Distributors (TGD) to include online product feed capabilities with advanced drop-shipping.

Dealers can now list vendors' products directly on websites and in-store kiosks, leveraging an extensive product catalog without maintaining physical inventory.

Customers can now purchase products directly from TGD's catalog, with options to have items shipped directly to them for non-licensed products or routed to local firearms dealers for licensed-item pickups.

"TGD brings exceptional value to our retailers' product catalogs with their battlefield-proven, military-grade tactical gear that Marines and soldiers have tested worldwide. By combining comprehensive product data with drop-shipping capabilities, dealers can dramatically expand their product offerings without increasing inventory costs or warehouse space," said Michele Salerno, chief growth officer of Celerant Technology.

Celerant and TGD have been partnered for over a year and have offered multiple integrations, including the TGD product catalog import directly within the point-of-sale software and the ability to create and send purchase orders directly from within the Celerant software.

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

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CROW WHOLESALE LAUNCHES C.L.A.Y.S. TO SUPPORT SCHOLASTIC SHOOTING SPORTS

Crow Wholesale, a leading distributor of ammunition and clay targets to gun clubs nationwide, announced its C.L.A.Y.S. (Collegiate Level And Youth Shooting) Team Program. This initiative is designed to support academic shooting teams by providing exclusive benefits, streamlined purchasing and priority fulfillment to help sustain and grow competitive shooting sports at the scholastic level.

Recognizing the importance of collegiate and youth shooting teams in fostering the next generation of competitive shooters, Crow Wholesale has tailored the C.L.A.Y.S. program to address the unique needs and challenges these

teams face. Participation in the program is free, offering teams an opportunity to access crucial resources without additional financial burden.

“By offering benefits like free shipping, priority fulfillment and discounts on gear, we’re making it easier for teams to focus on training and competition instead of logistics and costs,” said Shawn McGuire, VP of sales at Crow Wholesale.

Crow’s C.L.A.Y.S. Team Program provides convenient, one-stop shopping, with easy ordering for all ammunition and clay target needs. Full-pallet ammunition orders ship free while targets are excluded from free shipping. Flexible purchasing, allowing mixing and matching in-stock inventory for a custom pallet, is also available. Teams receive priority order fulfillment, even during times of high demand. Crow is also offering exclusive discounts, with savings



on essential gear that includes eye and ear protection.

Participating teams will earn rewards to use on future purchases in the form of a 1-percent back-in-account credit.

Crow Wholesale understands the operational challenges of running a competitive team, and aims to ease those burdens with reliable service, cost-saving benefits and a long-term commitment to the shooting sports community.

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

ZANDERS CELEBRATES 25 YEARS AS ELEY AMMUNITION DISTRIBUTOR

Zanders Sporting Goods is celebrating its 25th year as the exclusive U.S. distributor of ELEY ammunition. This milestone marks a long-standing partnership between two industry leaders, both committed to delivering world-class ammunition to shooting enthusiasts, hunters and professionals across the country.

ELEY, a globally recognized brand with a legacy of excellence in precision rimfire

ammunition, has been a trusted choice for Olympic champions, competitive shooters and hunters. Through its exclusive distribution agreement, Zanders has played a vital role in ensuring that American shooters have consistent access to ELEY’s high-quality products.

“Our commitment to quality, service and the shooting sports community has made this partnership truly special, and we look forward to continuing this legacy for years to come,” said Danny Siegler, president and COO at Zanders Sporting Goods.

“This partnership has been a remarkable journey, and the ELEY team would like to thank the Zanders team for



their relentless pursuit in growing the ELEY brand across the magnificent U.S. I look forward to success for many more years to come,” said Michael Atkinson, ELEY director.

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

BEAR CREEK ARSENAL ANNOUNCES IN-HOUSE CERAKOTE SERVICES

Bear Creek Arsenal introduced its own brand of in-house Cerakote services, Bear Creek Kustom Kote. This new offering will provide customers with high-quality, custom Cerakote finishes, starting with Flat Dark Earth, Olive Drab Green and tungsten options.

Cerakote is renowned for its durability,



corrosion resistance and aesthetic appeal, making it a popular choice for firearm enthusiasts looking to personalize and protect their investments. Bear Creek Kustom Kote will deliver Cerakote finishes that meet the highest standards of quality

and craftsmanship.

Full custom orders beyond the initial offerings will be coming in the future, allowing Bear Creek customers to choose from a wide range of colors and designs.

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

STREAMLIGHT LAUNCHES SPECIAL EDITION “LIGHTS FOR A CAUSE”

Streamlight Inc. recently launched four new “Lights for a Cause” models to support two major nonprofit organizations. The new lights include the BCRF Pink Nano Light II, BCRF Pink Wedge XT, C.O.P.S. Blue Nano Light II and C.O.P.S. Blue Wedge XT. The lights are designed to raise awareness of and funding for the Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF) and Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.).

“As a long-time corporate supporter of these two critically important organizations, Streamlight is proud to introduce these new ‘Lights for a Cause,’ which offer customers dependable tools while also funding vital work,” said Michael F. Dineen, Streamlight president. “Whether supporting the families and

co-workers of fallen officers or advancing life-saving cancer research, these special-edition lights give back in a meaningful way.”

The Nano Light II is an ultra-compact keychain light that delivers 20 lumens of brightness and one hour of run time, powered by a single AAAA alkaline battery. Lightweight and durable, it’s made of machined aluminum and includes a non-rotating snap hook for quick, one-handed use.

The Wedge XT is a USB-C rechargeable, everyday carry light that provides 500 lumens of bright white light and features a slim, flat profile for comfortable pocket carry. It features a tactical push-button tail switch, deep pocket clip and an 11-hour run time on low, making it ideal for users who rely on a powerful yet easily portable lighting solution.

Streamlight is donating \$1 from the purchase of each Pink Nano Light II and \$3 from the purchase of each Pink Wedge XT to the BCRF. Both lights are marked



Streamlight Wedge XT – C.O.P.S. (top), BCRF (bottom)

with the BCRF logo. The BCRF’s mission is to advance the world’s most promising research to eradicate breast cancer.

The company is also donating \$1 from the purchase of each Blue Nano Light II and \$3 from the purchase of each Blue Wedge XT, both marked with the C.O.P.S. logo, to C.O.P.S. The C.O.P.S. mission is rebuilding the shattered lives of surviving family members and co-workers affected by a line-of-duty death.

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

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AKKAR ANNOUNCES U.S. EXPANSION

Akkar, a leading shotgun manufacturer in Istanbul, Turkey, since 1985, has expanded to the U.S. with Akkar USA, located in North Kansas City, Mo. Industry veteran David Miller is the CEO of Akkar USA.

“Whether in the field or on the range, our goal is to provide a firearm that’s reliable, durable and built to perform. We’re excited to bring Akkar’s legacy of quality to the American market, and stand behind every shotgun we sell,” he said.

Akkar USA blends heritage craftsmanship with modern engineering to produce firearms for all levels of hunting enthusiasts and competitive shooters. The company offers a selection



The Akkar USA team gathered outside its North Kansas City, Mo., headquarters.

of over/under, pump, side-by-side and special-purpose shotgun models, all designed for both safety and performance.

Akkar USA is committed to making

high-quality firearms with competitive pricing and boasts exceptional customer service and local support.

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

OSCF ANNOUNCES LATEST “FILL A BAG WHILE FILLING YOUR TAG” PARTNER

The Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation (OSCF) announced the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is the latest partner to join the “Fill A Bag While Filling Your Tag” national conservation engagement program.

The program distributes reusable, biodegradable bags to outdoor enthusiasts to collect trash they encounter while enjoying outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, trapping and target shooting.

“Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has a long history of supporting conservation and clean habitats. We appreciate their passion for keeping ecosystems clean, and thank them for distributing these reusable, biodegradable bags to their customers who will use them to clean up nature while enjoying the outdoors,” said OSCF Board Member Julie Golob.

The OSCF’s “Fill A Bag While Filling Your Tag” program has distributed more than 100,000 bags to HATS (hunters, anglers, trappers and shooters) across America, who then used them to help clean up the environment.

Directions printed on the bags ask HATS to get credit for being stewards of conservation by posting photos and videos and using the hashtag #TrophyTrash on their social media channels to show others who the true stewards of conservation are.

“The ‘Fill A Bag’ program is a natural fit for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. We know our customers are conservationists, and providing these bags is a great way for them to lead by example through cleaning up both public and private lands across Texas,” said TPWD Hunter Education Coordinator Steve Hall.

The OSCF thanks “Fill A Bag” partners Fiocchi Ammunition, Ruger, Marlin, Creedmoor Sports, National Rifle Association, Federal Ammunition, Hevi-Shot Ammunition, Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and TPWD. Bags



OSCF’s “Fill A Bag While Filling Your Tag” program has distributed more than 100,000 bags to HATS all over the U.S.

can be personalized with partner logos, messages, web addresses and social tags.

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



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GUNBROKER ANNOUNCES NON-FFL SELLERS FIREARM SHIPPING SOLUTION

GunBroker.com has launched a new shipping solution to help address some of the issues that can arise when shipping FFL-restricted goods.

One of the biggest headaches for private sellers or those needing to ship a firearm for servicing or custom work can be navigating the shipping regulations and policies around shipping firearms. Now, with the creation of a dedicated shipping solution, all sellers can ship to federal firearms license holders through a streamlined system.

Sellers of firearms can enter the FFL number of the destination shop and labels

will be automatically created. This ensures all address and shipping information is accurate and the FFL status is verified.


The label is also automatically “sanitized” of any information identifying the package as containing a firearm. For example, if the recipient is “John’s Gun Warehouse” the label will display it as “JG Warehouse” or “JGW.” In addition to meeting shipper requirements, this also prevents any information from advertising the contents of the package.

Shippers are guided through the shipping options, based on what type of firearm is being shipped. This ensures compliance with all shipping regulations and reduces headaches for the seller. For example, handguns are required to be sent by air, so those are the only options presented.

Not only does this make the process



easier and safer, it also allows sellers to handle all their listing, sale, payment and shipping processes within their GunBroker space. It also keeps shipping charges within their GunBroker account for easier bookkeeping by sellers. GunBroker has also negotiated attractive pricing for this program.

The FFL shipping is live now for GunBroker sellers. Simply select it on the shipping information page and follow the prompts through shipment creation all the way to label printing. 

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

The background of the advertisement features a close-up, high-contrast photograph of a handgun and several rounds of ammunition. The handgun is a semi-automatic pistol with a textured grip, and the ammunition consists of several brass-cased rounds. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the metallic surfaces and the texture of the grip.

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B. QUINN

Sturm, Ruger & Co. Appoints VP

Sturm, Ruger & Company Inc. appointed Ben Quinn as the VP of strategy and business development. Quinn will be instrumental in shaping Ruger's strategic direction, identifying and advancing growth initiatives and driving critical business outcomes.

Ruger CEO Todd Seyfert stated, "His strategic insight and leadership will be key as we focus on growth, operational alignment and delivering long-term value."

Quinn brings experience to Ruger from high-impact roles at organizations such as United Airlines, Strategy& (PwC's global strategy consulting business) and most recently, as director of strategic initiatives at Dometic Corp.

He earned an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.



B. FLEMING

WOOX Welcomes CEO

Ben Fleming is now serving as the CEO and VP of sales for WOOX. Fleming will lead WOOX's global sales strategy, accelerate its expansion across dealer and distributor networks and guide the company into its next chapter of product innovation and market growth.

He brings over a decade of experience in the shooting industry, most notably from serving as VP of sales at Bergara/BPI Outdoors.



A. BURGESS

Laura Burgess Marketing Names President

Laura Burgess Marketing (LBM) announced the promotion of Ashley Burgess Gall to president.

Laura Burgess, founder of the company, will serve as an advisor to Gall as she transitions into the position.

Burgess stated, "[Gall] has continued to demonstrate she is ready for this leadership role by assuming direct managerial relationships with all our clients, guiding their public relations and marketing projects."

Throughout her 16-year career with LBM, Gall has played a pivotal role in shaping the company's strategic direction. She originally joined LBM to introduce social media as a key marketing tool for the industry but quickly expanded her expertise to encompass public relations, media strategy, brand positioning and content development.



J. ZINNEL

MidwayUSA Foundation Adds Board Members

MidwayUSA Foundation's board of directors appointed Jon Zinnel as its president and Nancy Bacon as VP. Zinnel joined the board in 2021 and is the director

of community relations for Federal Premium, Remington, Hevi-Shot and CCI Ammunition.

"Jon Zinnel has a compelling record of supporting youth in the shooting sports. His knowledge, experience and passion make him well-suited to lead our board of directors as the new president," said G. Scott Reynolds, executive director of MidwayUSA Foundation.

Bacon is the VP of Southwick Associates and has served on the board since 2022.

"I am also thrilled to have Nancy Bacon assume the role of board vice president. Nancy is a committed outdoorswoman whose enthusiasm and

commitment to our nation's youth make her the ideal person to assume this board leadership role," added Reynolds.



K. STAPLES

Primary Arms Promotes VPs

Primary Arms promoted Kody Staples to VP of marketing, and Scott Tirman to VP of Primary Arms Optics.



S. TIRMAN

Staples oversees all aspects of marketing across key business units,

including e-commerce, optics, government and wholesale. He also leads the customer service division.

Marshall Lerner, founder and CEO of Primary Arms, said, "With this expanded role, [Staples] will drive even greater synergy across our business units, strengthening our brand, enhancing customer engagement and ensuring that our marketing and service efforts work seamlessly to support our long-term growth."

Tirman leads the full optics division, including supply chain, manufacturing, engineering and sales.

"[Tirman's] ability to align operations with market demands and his relentless pursuit of excellence will be invaluable as we continue to innovate and grow in the optics space," said Lerner.



D. LARSON

Diamondback Firearms Names Marketing Director

Dave Larson has joined Diamondback Firearms as the director of marketing and is responsible for overseeing all marketing initiatives across the company's product lines.

"[Larson's] industry knowledge and innovative

approach to marketing will help us continue to connect with our customers while expanding our reach in both domestic and international markets,” said Faith Denman, CEO of Diamondback Firearms.

Larson most recently served in a senior marketing position at Maxim Defense.



G. AYERS

C&H Precision Taps Sales & Marketing VP

As the new VP of sales and marketing at C&H Precision, GW Ayers is leading the company's strategic

sales and marketing efforts, leveraging his background in the defense and firearms industries to drive growth and expand market reach.

Buck Holly, owner of C&H Precision, expressed, “GW brings a unique combination of military, retail and industry experience that will be instrumental in driving our brand forward.”

Ayers served 22 years in the U.S. Army before transitioning to the defense industry. He later moved into the firearms sector, founding and operating several high-end retail stores and shooting ranges.



Fiocchi Of America Welcomes Sales Director

Fiocchi of America welcomed Todd Ruff as its new director of sales, where he oversees sales strategies, strengthening customer relationships and driving continued growth in the U.S. market.

Chris Tinkle, VP of sales at Fiocchi of America, shared, “[Ruff’s] expertise and leadership will be instrumental in expanding our market presence and delivering exceptional service to our customers. Todd’s vision aligns perfectly with our mission to provide high-quality ammunition to shooters and hunters across the country.”



S. MCCART



J. ANDERSON

SCTP Grows Team

The Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) hired Sylvia McCart as programs manager for the southeast region, and Jason Anderson as the southwest director of development.

“We are grateful to have Sylvia join us as the SE programs manager,” commented Wayne Rasmussen, SCTP national

director. “She has a long history of working with youth shooting teams and helping grow the SCTP.”

Anderson has served the youth development program for several years as a regional field representative, Texas state director and local team head coach.



C. SYKES

CAHSS Selects Exec. Director

The Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports (CAHSS) named Chuck Sykes as its new executive director. His appointment is effective on July 1, 2025.

“Chuck Sykes is exactly the right person, at the right point in time, to take the council to the next level,” said Mark Tisa, Ph.D., CAHSS board chair.

Sykes has served as the director of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries at the

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources since 2012.

A graduate of Auburn University with a degree in wildlife biology, Sykes founded a full-service natural resource consulting firm in 1999.

In 2001, he launched “The Management Advantage,” TV program on the Outdoor Channel that focused on wildlife management and habitat restoration. The show aired for 11 years, educating landowners and the public on sustainable conservation practices.



D. MCKAY

Liberty Safe Names CRO

Liberty Safe recently appointed Donny McKay as its new chief revenue officer. McKay aims to utilize his knowledge of pricing strategy, customer relationship management and business development to expand Liberty Safes’ product offerings and enhance customer value.

“Donny’s expertise in revenue growth, strategic leadership and market intelligence will be invaluable as we continue to strengthen Liberty Safe’s position as the industry leader,” said Dave Foley, CEO of Liberty Safe.

McKay most recently served as SVP of sales and marketing at American Security Products. **SI**

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BY MASSAD AYOOB

RIDING THE RETRO WAVE

All products seem to have cycles. The fashion industry is a classic example. We also see it in vehicles: Look how many 1930s' style PT Cruisers the Chrysler Corporation sold. (More than 1 million during its 10-year production run.)

Cycles are true of firearms, too. Not necessarily sweeping changes, but definite trends of things once thought to be obsolete becoming popular again as new generations discover the attributes that made them popular in the past.

At the moment, this includes revolvers (particularly snubbies), lever-action rifles, smaller-caliber handguns and even double-barrel shotguns. Let's take a look.

"SNUBBY" RENAISSANCE

Revolvers, particularly compact "snubbies," are coming back.

Lipseys commissioned a special run of J-Frame "hammerless" Smith & Wessons with good sights, smooth actions and improved stocks. They relied heavily on advice from two recognized experts on defensive handguns in general and revolvers in particular, Bryan Eastridge and Darryl Bolke. Half of the production run was in .32 H&R Magnum (hold the thought, we'll come back to this) and half in the traditional snubby chambering of .38 Special.

They're dubbed the "UC" series for "Ultimate Carry." The stocks are unlikely to shift in the hand upon recoil, and

they have a big tritium front night sight complemented by a big U-notch rear sight. This helps these Airweight guns, already very easy and comfortable to carry, to be shot much more effectively. Serious handgunners are reportedly buying them in droves.

In recent years, Colt successfully reintroduced its long discontinued "D" frame guns, which around 1927 really created the genre of the small-frame, snub-nose .38 Special. Their Cobra and King Cobra lines seem to be selling well.

Similarly, Kimber has sold so many of its K6 snubbies, they've expanded the product line significantly. The Ruger LCR and its predecessor, the all-steel SP101, continue to be steady sellers available in multiple configurations, calibers and barrel lengths. Heritage Mfg. came out with a classic retro-looking snubby, the Roscoe, for the low price-point market, which it shares with companies like Armscor. Taurus has upped its quality control with the 856 and similar revolvers in their current catalogue.

.32-CALIBER COMEBACK

.32s are coming back. Walther recently made news with the reintroduction of the PPK in caliber .32 ACP. Recoil is mild compared to the more popular .380. (Editor's Note: For tips on selling the .380 today, refer to this column in the April 2025 issue.)

The late gun expert Phil Engeldrum may have been ahead of his time when he wrote he preferred the .32 to the .380

◀ Marketed to consumers as "your ace in the hole pulled right out of the Old West," Heritage Mfg. designed the Roscoe as a tribute to gunfighters of decades past. It features a deep glossy finish, classic-style grips and is available in 2" or 3" barrel options.

because it held more rounds, kicked less and wasn't much different in potency in his opinion. Federal Ammunition has doubtless noted the same, having introduced a 65-grain premium jacketed hollowpoint .32 with a velocity of 925 fps — an indication this savvy ammo giant is seeing an increase in demand for the caliber.

KelTec has discontinued the P3AT, its innovative, super-small .380 that was the inspiration for Ruger's super-best-selling LCP series. *But it is still making its even smaller and lighter P32 in .32 ACP*, which tells us all something about market demand.

(Get some P32 presence in your handgun showcase. These little guns are so small and light they're almost novelty purchases for gun collectors. They can also hide in places where your customers who frequent non-permissive environments will appreciate something they can discreetly conceal.)



KelTec P32

All this to say, look for a renewal of interest in the KelTec P32. Two very powerful influencers among the serious handgun buyers are Craig "SouthNarc" Douglas and a man known as SLG because he is a federal agent and can't be seen to endorse products. Douglas has developed a surreptitious pocket draw with the P32 that works remarkably well, and SLG published a test of the P32 with a four-figure round count without cleaning that reassures the buying public about its reliability.

WE'D ALL TAKE 20%

Those just mentioned, of course, are autos.

Let's return to that UC series of small S&W revolvers in .32 H&R Magnum. While I haven't been convinced of the caliber's effectiveness based on a couple of self-defense shootings and testing on hogs, many are comfortable with its light recoil and the fact it puts a sixth shot into little guns that only hold five .38 or .357 rounds.

Your customers who carry 9mm pistols with 15-, 17- or even 20-round magazines may scoff at the value of one extra cartridge, but it means a lot to some who prefer revolvers. Remind the revolver-buyer the sixth round is a 20% increase in firepower, and none of us would turn down a 20% increase in lifespan, income or health.

When Colt had its famous brand war with Smith & Wesson decades ago, they advertised that unlike J-Frame S&Ws, the similar-size Colt "D" frame offered what its maker called the "all-important sixth shot."

ON THE UPSWING: LEVER-ACTION CARBINES

Across the board, we're seeing an increase in sales of the lever-action carbine. Sometimes in handgun calibers, sometimes in the traditional .30-30 Winchester, sometimes even in powerhouse bear-busting calibers.

In the personal defense market, the public is aware of the constant assault on autoloading rifles by anti-gun politicians. The failed Democrat candidate in the last presidential election had promised she would institute a "buyback" confiscation of AR-15s and the like. Gun owners see a lever-action carbine as a home-defense weapon that is, at least for now, immune to confiscation.

American police have certainly proven with hollowpoint or soft-nose ammunition, that the .223 Rem./5.56mm NATO cartridge is a very effective fight-stopper. However, there is still a strong faction who agrees with the late Col. Jeff Cooper and views the .223 as a "poodle shooter" — wanting something with more power. These folks see as Cooper saw: millions of .30-30 rifles have killed *many* millions of man-size deer and even a bunch of bears, and are more confident with a .30-30.

Raves about the excellent quality control of Ruger's iteration of Marlin lever actions has helped sales. So has S&W's intro of a lever-action .44 Magnum carbine.

Discussing the company's Q2 2025 financial results last December, S&W CFO Deana McPherson said: "Net sales for our second quarter were nearly 4% above the prior year comparable quarter on the strength of our new BODYGUARD 380 pistol and lever-action rifles."

"FUN" SELLS, TOO

From the recreational side, we see something else. Manually operated guns are simply more fun to shoot! It is somewhat analogous to the sports car driver who prefers a manual transmission to automatic. There is a satisfying sense of the operator driving the machine instead of the machine driving the operator.



Ultra-modern 9mm autos and AR-15s will certainly continue to be the most popular of your personal protection stock in trade. But don't neglect the retro trends.

With a lever action, similarly, the shooter is running the machine, and it just gives a little more sense of accomplishment.

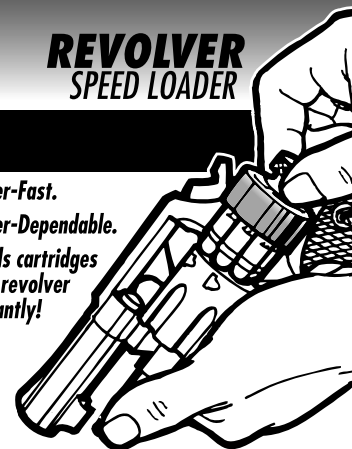
Ultra-modern 9mm autos and AR-15s will certainly continue to be the most popular of your personal protection stock in trade. But don't neglect the retro trends. They're here, some of your customers want them and if you don't have them in stock, well, your competitors will. **SI**

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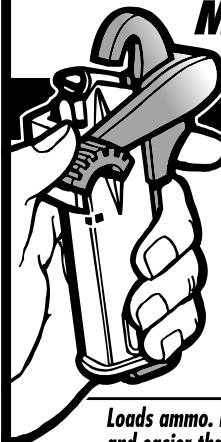
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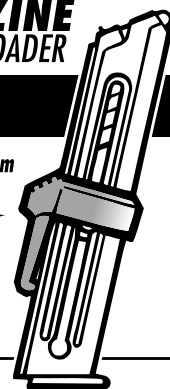
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BY CAROLEE ANITA BOYLES

WOMEN OF THE GUN: HOW WE'VE CHANGED

Today, women are accepted and even celebrated in the shooting sports. Women occupy upper-level management positions in many companies and run retail stores. This has not always been the case. As recently as the mid-1990s, one major firearms manufacturer specifically banned women from attending its annual gun writers' seminar.

Fortunately for the industry, times have changed. The inclusion of women has brought not only them, but also their families, into shooting, hunting and greater participation in the industry. Walk the aisles of the SHOT Show and you'll see many retailers in their 30s and 40s, instead of just the 50-and-up crowd we saw 20 years ago.

The change in acceptance of women in our industry reflects the changes in American society as a whole. Just as women struggled to be recognized as an integral part of other industries, they also had to overcome prejudice in the firearms industry. It's worth looking back a little from the point of view of some of the women who lived it to see how times have changed.

"I FELT LIKE I HAD A TARGET ON MY BACK."

Linda Powell is the director of media relations at O.F. Mossberg & Sons, a position she has held since 2010. She is well-respected in the industry and

is passionate about mentoring young hunters, both male and female.

Powell began her career in this industry when she was in her mid-30s. She had been working in the medical field, then took a job with a hardware manufacturer in the marketing department. In mid-1996, Powell was hired as an administrative assistant in Remington's marketing department.

"I really didn't know anything about the gun industry at that point," Powell recalled. "There were two male managers at the time, and my job was to be in the office to support them; I replaced a lady who had been doing it for 20 years."

As it happened, the two male managers left the company for different reasons and Remington was without a PR manager.

"So, as the relatively new and not very knowledgeable administrative assistant, I actually ran the department for a year. We had the annual Remington seminar, I went to the SHOT Show and did the press conference and obviously, after I'd been doing it for a year, I felt like I had a good chance of being promoted. But then they hired a man and brought him in as the manager. He lasted a year, so by the time I'd been there four years, I got promoted to manager of the department and stayed for just over 14 years."

◀ Linda Powell with an ocellated turkey taken in Mexico. She has completed multiple Royal, Grand and World Slams in her career — and routinely shares her passion for hunting with others.

Powell got a lot of pushback when she was promoted.

"Internally at that time, Remington had a network entirely of men," she said. "I actually had someone pull me aside and say, 'You know, some people are having a hard time having a female in this position and you being out and being the face of the company. It's not everybody, but you need to know.' I felt like I had a target on my back."

What was interesting, she stated, was she was receiving a lot of recognition externally.

"I had so many cheerleaders within my network," Powell noted. "I had leading media and PR people within the industry who were all encouraging me to not give up. It's what kept me going in those early years. People knew I was capable and was doing the job; I was willing to learn and I was responsive. It took a little time, but I did see the tide start to change."

Once during the early 2000s, when Powell was the PR manager and Eddie Stevenson [who now serves as president of Driftwood Media] was the assistant manager, the two of them went to visit a hunting operation in eastern North Carolina to see about hosting a hunt there.

"From the minute we got there, the gentleman who ran the operation pretty much talked exclusively to Eddie and ignored me," she said. "The gentleman finally asked, 'Is she coming to cook in camp?' I answered, 'No, actually, I'm the one who's going to decide whether we come here to hunt or not.'"

One of the things she learned, Powell shared, was a woman coming into a male-dominated field needed to be aware of how to conduct herself.

"I was told from the start I needed to remember I would be held to a higher standard," she explained. "Being nice and friendly is one thing; being flirtatious is another. There's no question women were scrutinized more."

Even with all her struggles in the early years, Powell is grateful to be a part of the shooting industry.

"It's been an incredible journey for me, and I am so thankful for the opportunities," she concluded. "My

life has changed in ways I never envisioned and it's all due to this industry and the opportunities it's given me."

"IF YOU WANT THE INFORMATION ON IT, YOU'LL HAVE TO ASK HER."

Sherry Kerr is the director of communications at the National Skeet Shooting Association (NSSA) and the National Sporting Clays Association (NSCA). Part of her responsibility is serving as publisher and editorial director of *Clay Target Nation Magazine*.

For 30+ years prior to her tenure at the magazine, she owned and was president of Outdoor Media Resources, a PR and marketing company serving manufacturers such as Simmons Optics and Thompson/Center Arms. Like Powell, Kerr met resistance early in her career from some facets of the industry.

"I used to have writers call me about Simmons or T/C, and sometimes one would ask me to ask my husband something," she stated. "Once, a particular writer called and was asking about a scope and I was telling him the information, and he asked, 'Well, would you ask your husband?' I answered, 'I will if you really want me to, but he doesn't know anything about it.' And he asked again, 'Could I maybe speak to him?' So, I got my husband on the phone and the guy asked his question and my husband told the writer 'I don't know anything about that. This is her business, and I don't know anything about it. If you want the information on it, you'll have to ask her.'"

While it would be nice to think this kind of prejudice is a thing of the past, it's not necessarily the case. Kerr became the editorial director of *Clay Target Nation Magazine* about 10 years ago when the publication replaced two separate magazines published by NSSA and NSCA. Her advertising director for the magazine also is a woman, a fact that wasn't lost on some of the old-time male clays shooters.

"On some of the old forums of shotgunners, there was a guy who was complaining because we closed the two old magazines," she shared. "He said, 'That new magazine is just run by



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a bunch of gyno-Americans."

To Kerr, it's an amusing label.

"We have enjoyed it so much," she said. "We take a lot of pride in saying we're gyno-Americans, but that sort of thing is a lot less common now than it used to be. And it's been a long, long time since anyone has asked me to ask my husband."



The way women overcame prejudice was to know their products and know what they were talking about.

"IT ALL CAME DOWN TO YOU KNOWING YOUR PRODUCT."

Becky Bowen is an icon in the industry. She went to work for Dixie Gun Works in Union City, Tenn., right out of high school in the mid-1960s. From there, she would go to B. E. Hodgdon and the Hodgdon Powder Company, and from there to American Arms.

"My best job ever was working with Barbara Mellman at Bushnell Optics when it was in Overland Park, Kan.," she shared. "At the time, Bushnell had just bought the HOLOsight and was

promoting it. She needed help because she was doing all the advertising and promotion for everything else Bushnell was doing. One of the things we did was sponsor a shooting team, which was the HOLOsight Shooting Team, and I got to manage it. It was the best job and the most fun I had in the industry."

During the early years she was in the industry, Bowen said, sometimes she faced what today would be considered sexual harassment.

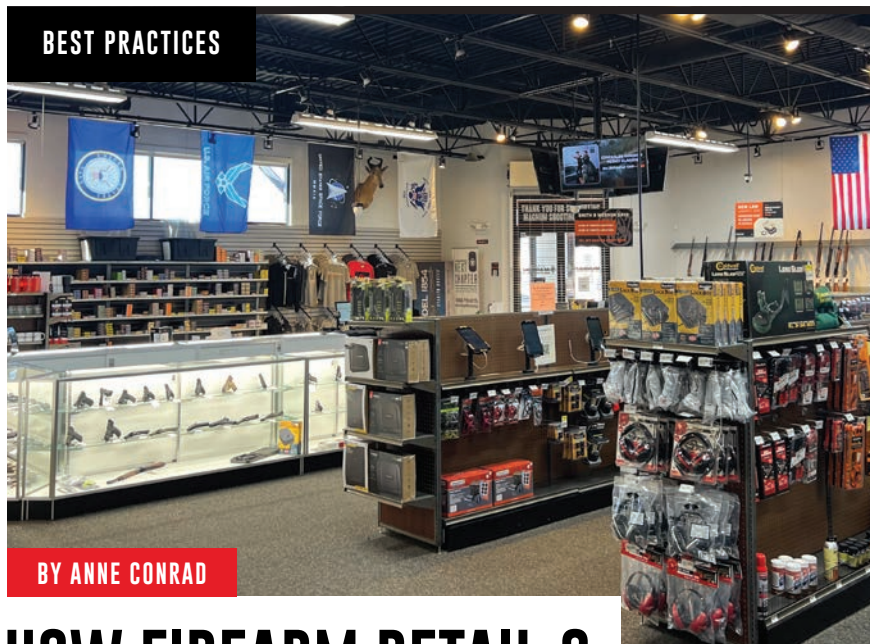
"You didn't get offended or make a big deal out of it, you just found out how to put people in their place," she asserted. "If you gave it any sort of importance, you lost your importance."

At the end of the day, Bowen noted, the way women overcame prejudice was to know their products and know what they were talking about.

"You couldn't just go in there and fake it and be a cute little thing," she said. "It all came down to you knowing your product. You weren't just some flaky little airhead who the boss had put in as eye candy. And we had to counteract it. Most of us did it with a lot of dignity and a lot of humor." **SI**

We want to hear from you! What other trailblazing women have made a lasting impact in the firearms industry? Help us shine a light on those who paved the way for others. Share your stories with us: comments@shootingindustry.com.

BEST PRACTICES



BY ANNE CONRAD

HOW FIREARM RETAIL & RANGE CENTERS WIN

Retail sales are challenging, but firearms retail sales can be daunting. We have all watched good stores fail in recent years due to political challenges and internal missteps. There is a new crop of gun enthusiasts in the market these days and paying attention to the fact that firearm sales aren't only made to "good ol' boys" is also essential.

I spend a fair amount of time in gun stores reviewing products and using their shooting ranges. I also worked at Magnum Shooting Center, a major retailer/range, for five years in both sales and executive administration in Colorado Springs, Colo. I have seen the challenges gun stores face firsthand and know something about navigating retail firearm sales.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Creating a welcoming store isn't difficult but understanding you want to invite men and women of all ages, ethnicities and skill levels means you should consider what people encounter when they connect with your business.

- **Phone Etiquette:** My favorite gun stores answer their phones. Wait, don't they all? Nope, they don't. When possible, set a company goal of answering phones in less than three rings.

Listen to how your salespeople

answer the phone. Are they friendly and welcoming? Do they identify your business and speak clearly? Have them practice smiling on the phone whenever they answer. A smile truly does reach through the phone.

- **Clear Signage & A Clean Parking Lot:** A clean, well-lit parking lot free of weeds and trash, with attractive, clear signage, goes a long way to making a customer feel welcome. Can you see your business sign from the road? Are your hours of operation posted? How about adding a lighted "Open/Closed" sign?

- **Welcoming Entrance & An Inviting, Well-Laid-Out Store:** Have someone not related to your business do a walkthrough to help spot problems with a fresh eye. We often see the same things repeatedly and fail to notice them anymore. Are your shelves clean, orderly and well stocked by category? Are product signs well-marked and professional-looking?

(Be careful of your décor. That sexy poster or girly calendar might have been great in the past, but is it pushing professional sales and comfort to everyone coming into your store?)

SALES TRAINING & VENDOR REPRESENTATIVES

Successful salespeople understand sales are created by forging a relationship with the customer.

◀ Featuring a modern, open floor plan, Magnum Shooting Center maintains diverse inventory. At a glance, this organized presentation helps make the store more inviting for customers to peruse products.

Knowing about guns doesn't necessarily make your staff good at sales and customer service.

Pay attention to good salespeople when you are out in public, and what makes you want to hand over your hard-earned dollars. Impart this wisdom with your staff and get them professional training if necessary. Offer your salespeople resources to take a class, read books or watch sales training videos. There are oodles of resources available. It only takes a short Google hop to see what is out there.

Pro tip: Take advantage of your manufacturer sales representatives. I have seen gun store staff get annoyed by having sales reps call on them. But why not turn them into valuable tools for building your business? Require sales staff to sit with them and experience their products so they can better highlight the features.

Invite reps to give seminars to your customers or even create an event and have several of them bring swag and hire some food trucks. If salespeople don't know why a product is impressive, what's the point in offering it?

MARKETING TO THE LADIES

In the past 15–20 years, the industry has welcomed women in a big way to a traditionally male space. Gun stores want customers of all shapes and sizes, and most stores welcome all customers, but I also see stores misstep when marketing to women. Welcoming women into your store is not about *telling* them what they need, but giving them the information to choose products for themselves.

- **Ditch The Stereotype:** Women prioritize performance, reliability and comfort over color and shine. Offering only gimmicky pink or purple choices is insulting. Present various options and let them decide what feels best and raises their confidence.

- **Don't Assume Knowledge Level:** Make it your mission when a couple enters your store to not only speak to the man, thereby assuming the woman is only there as clueless eye candy. I have personally been talked down to or ignored when I enter a gun store with a man when

I am the more experienced purchaser. You don't know, so don't assume.

- **Hire Female Staff Members If**

Possible: We women are pack animals and love to share and experience things together. We compare notes on everything, and a one-on-one with a knowledgeable new friend will increase your bottom line and bring them back. Many excellent men teach women, but good female salespeople can be a tremendous asset.

- **Take A Genuine Interest In**

Stocking Female-Friendly Products:

This will require homework and input from your female customers. Don't just stock some pink guns, throw a rack of sparkly concealed carry purses on the wall and call it a day. Offer guidance on comfortable carry options, storage solutions and safety gear.

Host female-focused events and classes and partner with local women's organizations to co-host self-defense seminars, intro to firearms training, ladies' nights and more. Build a sisterhood.

DON'T SKIMP ON GOOD ADVERTISING

When the gun industry experiences tough times, shop owners can panic, and frequently, the first thing cut is the advertising budget. It's scary to spend dollars that don't seem to give a visual ROI.

When times get tough, get creative and promote more. You might not have as large of a budget, but adding things such as loyalty programs

and thank-you events help bring customers back in the door during harder times.

Todd Lockburner, COO of Magnum Shooting Center, said, "When things get slow, gun shops cut their advertising budgets — and that's a big mistake. They must make a big effort to continue engaging customers via email campaigns, radio advertisements, TV and text messages."



When things get slow, gun shops cut their advertising budgets — and that's a big mistake."

Todd Lockburner • COO
Magnum Shooting Center • Colorado Springs, Colo.

Melissa Lockburner, senior manager of Magnum Shooting Center, offered the following idea: "When searching for cost-effective ways to engage with customers, consider using texting services such as OtterText. These services can keep you in constant communication with your customers, providing updates on new products, promotions and events. This can significantly improve customer engagement and keep your business on their mind."



Shooters World Villages (Florida) offers 48,000 sq. ft. of retail and a 39-lane indoor range facility. On-site gunsmiths, event space, pro-shop style retail showroom and golf-cart accessibility combine to make it a destination for enthusiasts.

CONSIDER NSSF RESOURCES

NSSF has a wide variety of programs and resources to help gun shops grow and stay informed of changes in the firearm industry. NSSF puts on the coveted trade-only SHOT Show and welcomes thousands of industry professionals to view and learn about new products and practices each January.

NSSF offers an opportunity to add your store and shooting center to its prestigious Star Rating system. The Star Rating gives customers confidence that your business is held to a higher standard. Range/retail centers can apply to receive a 3-star, 4-star or 5-star rating.

One of the best tools we used at Magnum Shooting Center was the NSSF Star Rating system application. It is a thorough guide to help indoor retail and range businesses and has an application for outdoor ranges. There are four categories (Appearance, Management, Shooting Sports Development and Amenities) for the rating, with in-depth sections for each category. Even if you don't want to be a part of the rating system, using the application as a business checklist is invaluable.

Zach Snow, NSSF director of member development, noted, "I encourage gun centers to 'strive for five' on the application. The checklist is especially useful in helping centers identify gaps in their operations."

Find out more about the NSSF Star Rating system: nssf.org.

NSSF's Premium Range Membership is available for both range and retail members. It offers many benefits, including mock OSHA inspections and a mock ATF compliance audit to help your center identify potential problems.

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK

Running a successful gun store and range is challenging, but the rewards are numerous. Meeting wonderful people, sharing products and expertise to keep them safe or to find a new hobby is to fully appreciate your purpose. Creating ways to succeed is important. Using some of these tips will enhance customer engagement — and your bottom line. **SI**



BEYOND THE GUN RACK

BY HANK YACEK

Smart Inventory Diversification For Today's Firearm Retailer

Before reading this, please take a moment to put on your “customer hat” and evaluate your business from their perspective.

Does your current customer base visit your store because you sell firearms or because you sell a “firearms lifestyle?”

Terms like “everyday carry” (EDC), hunting, concealed carry and competitive target shooting allude to the fact that people aren’t patronizing your business because you just sell guns. They’re trying to engage with a lifestyle, be it security or recreationally minded.

CAST A WIDER NET — PUN INTENDED

In times of lagging sales, lower footfall numbers and narrowing margins, we need to take a step back and fundamentally understand this lifestyle mantra and give ourselves permission to go “beyond the gun rack” and explore new arenas of products and services.

This can help us not only engage more with our current customer base but also connect with new customers. As the saying goes, to catch more fish, you need to cast a wider net (pun intended).

So, yes, my pun was to open the idea of what we will call “industry-adjacent” products. In many parts of the country, we see a peak in interest in fishing at the exact same time the firearm industry sees its normal slump in the spring and early summer.

If you think about it, it's likely a big swath of the summer's lack of sales is because our firearm customers are out fishing. If we view our shops as lifestyle stores, then why not cater to the devoted customers who want to do business with us — but can't — because we're not offering what they want during the spring and summer? This doesn't mean it's necessary to carry fishing tackle year-round, but why not offer a seasonal assortment and give customers more reasons to shop with you?

Here's a list of some other industry-adjacent product categories worth a look:

- Archery
- Watches
- Precious Metals
- Food/M meal Preparation Tools
- Knives/Cutlery
- Outdoor Cooking/Grills/Smokers

LEVERAGE SEASONAL GOODS

Above is just a cursory list and will vary depending on your customers' lifestyles. The key to heading down this path is threefold.

First, find a source of these products that allows you to resell them in a profitable way. Some of these products may already be available from current vendors, or may require a few phone calls or emails to build those connections.

Second, target when it's appropriate to inventory these items. Is it a year-round category or seasonal? If it's seasonal, when is the right time to order products to have them in stock at the peak sales season?

Third, how will you clear out the inventory when it is past peak season? Depending on the product, options as simple as eBay or other online auction houses help to rid leftover inventory within a week and use the liberated cash for the next industry-adjacent assortment relevant to the season. The

key here is to play the ups and downs of seasonal goods and leverage them profitably.

UPSCALE OR DOWNSCALE?

Speaking of ups and downs, we can diversify our offerings once again by casting a wider net while staying solidly within the firearms industry. The key is to explore two strategic directions: upscale or downscale.

Take a long, honest look at your current assortment and see if there are price points customers largely ignore. Consider who those customers might be and build an assortment around them. Lower income? Independently wealthy? Students? All these profiles have very specific price points at which they engage based on their budgets.



If we view our shops as lifestyle stores, then why not cater to the devoted customers who want to do business with us — but can't — because we're not offering what they want during the spring and summer?

In my experience, too many shops do not cater to the high-end clientele enough. These are customers with near recession-proof discretionary cash. This market is a steady burn and doesn't see the radical spikes and dips like the rest of our industry experiences and can generate significantly more profit dollars per transaction.

The challenge here is the need

to approach a national customer base, not just local. Pull this feat off and there will be a predictable (and profitable) new sector of your business.

CHANGE ... SOMETHING

Lastly, change how you see existing inventory and pitch it in a fundamentally different way. In these tumultuous economic times with lots of change in the import/export markets, the following saying attributed to self-help guru Tony Robbins speaks true: “By changing nothing, nothing changes.”

We can absolutely engage with the same customers, with the same inventory, in a fundamentally different way. Here's an example. Over the past couple of years, ammunition manufacturers have been clearly telegraphing a consistent message of continued ammunition price increases for the foreseeable future. Double down on this with the increases in material costs and we can easily envision ammunition no different than gold or silver. Yes, market ammunition as an investment!

Create an investment program where customers make regular purchases of ammunition as nothing more than an investment tool. When we see the year-over-year potential for increases in ammunition prices of 25% or more, ammunition suddenly becomes a practical (and useful) investment device.

You could do the same for “blue chip” collectibles such as Smith & Wesson revolvers, Colt Single Action Army models or any number of other timeless collectibles with the spin of them being an alternate form of investment.

The point here: Broaden the horizon and fundamentally admit you're here to make profits. Sometimes, we must adjust where those profits are sourced from. Stop thinking of your shop as a gun shop, and think more of it as a lifestyle facility. Everything from there becomes a whole lot easier to dynamically adjust to market conditions. **SI**

By Ashley McGee

Next-Gen Self-Defense Training

How Technology Is Changing The Game For Firearm Owners

Firearm training has undergone a dramatic transformation in recent years. Gone are the days when preparation for self-defense meant static paper targets and a few hours on the

range. Today's shooters demand smarter, more effective and more accessible ways to build their skills, and technology is answering the call.

For FFLs, this evolution opens new doors for customer engagement, sales and long-term loyalty. Whether it's advanced dry-fire training tools, red dot optics or fully immersive shooting simulators, tech-driven solutions are reshaping what self-defense training looks like — and creating new opportunities for dealers and ranges alike.

“

All of this new technology represents more than just a shift in training methodology — it's a substantial business opportunity for FFLs.



THE EVOLUTION OF DRY-FIRE TRAINING SYSTEMS

Dry-fire training has long been favored by serious shooters looking to hone their skills without burning through ammunition. However, recent technological advances have supercharged the effectiveness of dry-fire practice.

Strikeman, for example, uses a laser cartridge and mobile app to turn nearly any room into a safe and effective dry-fire training environment. By pairing shot placement tracking with visual targets, Strikeman makes it easy for seasoned gun owners to practice key self-defense scenarios at home. For newer shooters, it's an approachable and confidence-building solution.

Similarly, Mantis offers dry-fire training system called Laser Academy. They have also developed sensor-based training systems that deliver detailed, real-time performance feedback. Its newest iteration, Mantis X10 Elite, attaches directly to a firearm and syncs with a mobile app, analyzing every movement from trigger pull to follow-through. The result is a dynamic, data-driven training experience to help shooters identify weaknesses and track improvement over time. These systems are increasingly being incorporated into firearms courses and private instruction — both on and off the range.

As dry-fire training systems have grown in popularity, one shortcoming has emerged. These tools often require the user to swap out their carry gear for training devices. In response,

“Dealers and ranges that stay ahead of the curve will be best positioned to meet the needs of modern firearm owners — especially those who view self-defense as an ongoing commitment, not a one-time event.”

last year Steiner released the TOR-X pistol-mounted laser, which integrates directly with the Mantis training system — a major step forward in this space — combining real-world defensive tools with cutting-edge training tech in one compact package.

With the TOR-X, the laser and training system are always on the gun, eliminating setup friction and promoting consistent, anytime-anywhere practice. This “train with what you carry” approach ensures muscle memory and technique transfer directly to real-world defensive scenarios.

The TOR-X isn't just another accessory; it's a powerful example of where self-defense training is headed. For dealers and ranges, it's a compelling product to recommend to self-defense-minded customers looking for an edge. It also fits perfectly into technology-driven training programs prioritizing practical skill development over gimmicks. As the line between tools and training continues to blur, products like the TOR-X are setting the tone for the next generation of personal defense.

Dealers and ranges that introduce these systems to customers not only offer valuable training tools but also create new revenue streams. Some dealers have started bundling dry-fire training tools with firearm purchases or offering in-store demos to drive sales. Others have worked with instructors to develop structured dry-fire classes, which help customers make the most of the technology.

GAMIFICATION BOOSTS TRAINING RETENTION

Part of why dry-fire training systems like Strikeman and Mantis have become so popular is the element of gamification that allows users to compete with themselves and with others. Gamification taps into intrinsic motivators — achievement, competition, progress and fun — which can transform traditional firearms training (often repetitive or stressful) into a more engaging and effective experience.

At the higher end of the spectrum, the Ace Virtual Shooting Simulator

provides an immersive training platform able to replicate real-world scenarios — from home invasions to defensive situations in public. This kind of scenario-based training allows users to practice decision-making under pressure, which is a crucial but often overlooked component of effective self-defense.

Ace Virtual Shooting develops users' skills with unlimited virtual ammo to shoot dry-fire drills, mini-games and skill-building exercises. With the use of a Meta Quest 2, 3, or 3S VR headset, users can track their training, compete against other players and review real-time analytics of their speed, accuracy and precision.

“The realism of the Ace Virtual Shooting environment is unlike anything I've ever experienced. It's incredibly fun and parallels the live-fire drills I shoot with my SIG P320MAX when I'm training,” said Max Michel, Team SIG Captain and champion professional shooter. “Ace Virtual Shooting is the closest thing to live-fire training, and I recommend it to anyone looking to hone their skills or maintain



MANTIS X10



ACE VIRTUAL SHOOTING SIMULATOR



their edge.”

Further solidifying the use of gamification in self-defense training, Strikeman announced at SHOT Show 2025 that it is bringing its advanced analytics and real-time tracking technology to the live-fire space with ShotSuite.

To showcase the power of ShotSuite, Strikeman hosted a leaderboard competition at its booth, allowing visitors to compete in a head-to-head challenge using the new system. Participants had the chance to track their accuracy, speed and consistency, with their results displayed in real-time on the leaderboard.

Strikeman also exhibited how ShotSuite can seamlessly integrate into professional shooting environments with the use of a Range Systems divider. It demonstrated the versatility of this new live-fire technology, highlighting its ability to function within controlled training spaces, commercial ranges and

home shooting setups.

THE RED DOT REVOLUTION

Alongside the rise of dry-fire training is another shift in the self-defense space: the widespread adoption of red dot optics. Once found primarily in competitive shooting or military applications, red dots are now commonly used on everyday carry pistols and personal defense firearms.

The appeal is clear. Red dots allow for faster, more intuitive target acquisition — particularly under stress — and offer improved accuracy over traditional iron sights. For shooters with aging eyes or those new to defensive training, the benefits are immediate and compelling.

Leading the optics charge are brands like Vortex, Trijicon and Aimpoint, each offering durable, combat-tested red dot sights suitable for self-defense. More recently, companies like OSIGHT have entered the market

with fresh innovations in dynamic targeting and illumination. Meanwhile, manufacturers such as HIVIZ Shooting Systems and XS Sights are helping ease the transition for shooters still getting used to optics, offering sight systems that blend fiber optic or tritium elements with intuitive designs.

Although red dot sights offer clear advantages, they also require training and adjustment. Dealers who take the time to educate customers on choosing and using red dots position themselves as trusted advisors. More and more retailers are finding success by offering hands-on demos in-store, hosting optics-focused events or working with local instructors to provide “red dot transition” classes.

At the range level, there’s a growing demand for courses specifically focused on red dot shooting fundamentals. These programs typically help shooters improve presentation, refine their dot acquisition speed and learn how to co-witness with backup sights. Some ranges also offer red dot-equipped rental firearms, allowing customers to try various setups before committing to a purchase — an added layer of service proven valuable for new and experienced shooters alike.

HOW GUN RANGES ARE ADAPTING & INNOVATING

Forward-thinking gun ranges are playing a critical role in the tech-driven training movement. Across the country, ranges are investing in new equipment and course development to meet the expectations of today’s firearm owners.

Some facilities have installed full-scale virtual simulators — such as the Ace system — to offer decision-based training for concealed carriers and law enforcement alike. Others have designated areas for dry-fire practice, equipped with Mantis or Strikeman setups that allow customers to work on fundamentals in a controlled environment.

In many cases, ranges are also adapting their class offerings to reflect emerging needs. Red dot sight courses are growing in popularity, as are skill-building programs focused on low-light shooting, movement and close-quarters engagement — skills pairing well with

red dot optics and simulated training.

What's most notable about these innovations is their ability to engage customers on an ongoing basis. Rather than viewing the range as a place to shoot once in a while, firearm owners are increasingly treating it as a training hub — returning regularly to practice, track progress and refine their skills. This shift benefits both the shooter and the business.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEALERS & RANGES

All of this new technology represents more than just a shift in training methodology — it's a substantial business opportunity for FFLs. By embracing tech-based training tools and integrating them into both retail and range operations, dealers can drive product sales, expand their course offerings and increase customer retention.

Some dealers have found success by bundling red dot optics with compatible firearms and dry-fire tools, offering customers a complete self-

“

What's most notable about these innovations is their ability to engage customers on an ongoing basis.

defense training package. Others are building long-term value by launching membership or subscription programs that include access to simulators, dry-fire stations and instructor-led classes.

Many ranges are also exploring hybrid training models, combining online instruction with in-person practice sessions. These formats are especially appealing to time-strapped customers and younger audiences who are used to digital learning environments.

Ultimately, dealers and ranges that stay ahead of the curve will be best positioned to meet the needs of modern

firearm owners — especially those who view self-defense as an ongoing commitment, not a one-time event.

EMBRACING THE FUTURE OF SELF-DEFENSE TRAINING

The training world is changing rapidly, and the most successful dealers and range operators will be those who recognize this evolution and act on it. Dry-fire systems, virtual simulators and red dot optics aren't just add-ons — they're key tools to help shooters prepare for real-world scenarios with more confidence and competence.

By embracing these technologies and creating meaningful training experiences around them, FFLs can deepen relationships with their customers, build new revenue streams and solidify their role as trusted resources in the self-defense journey.

In the end, the goal remains the same: helping customers become more capable, responsible and confident with their firearms. The difference today is we have better tools than ever to get them there. **SI**

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By Peter Suci

Personal defense experts are quick to remind those who carry a firearm for self-defense that the absolute

last thing anyone wants to find themselves in is a prolonged shootout.

The same holds true when it comes to firearms for home defense. The mentality should be about protecting the family from

intruders, not holding off a zombie apocalypse or stopping an assault from a criminal cartel.

If the need comes to defend the home, part of any game plan should include quickly gaining access to the firearm and dialing 911 as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Help won't come if the authorities aren't notified.

Long before a tactical plan needs to be considered, which could include everything from where family members should head in a crisis to the appropriate secure storage of a firearm, the

A SHORT TAKE ON LONG GUNS FOR HOME DEFENSE

first step is determining the right weapon for home defense. In this instance, we're looking at long guns specifically.

LONG GUNS & HOME DEFENSE

While Joe Biden is far from an authority on anything related to firearms, in a now-infamous 2013 video interview when he was VP, he suggested shotguns were the way to go over semi-automatic rifles.

He even recommended to then-Second Lady Dr. Jill Biden that firing “two blasts” would deter an intruder. Mr. Biden’s opinion on firearms has routinely been questioned, and such advice would be considered dangerous, to say the least.

Yet, there is a perception that shotguns could be better suited than other long guns, with supporters stating it is a “safer option” and easier to use for the untrained. Both of those arguments could fall into the “dangerous misinformation” category.

“Buckshot will have no problem penetrating drywall,” warned Barret Kendrick, who regularly serves as an expert witness in firearms-related trials. “People think shotguns are less dangerous, but a slug is still a heavy projectile and can penetrate two-by-four framing in a house.”

Kendrick did acknowledge Biden had a point: Pump shotguns can offer a psychological effect; the ratcheting of the weapon is an unmistakable sound.

“There is some truth in that statement,” Kendrick told *Shooting Industry*. “But when it comes to personal defense, a psychological factor isn’t something we can or

should count on.”

For this reason, Kendrick praises the merits of a rifle.

“An AR-15 can be easier to use than a shotgun. It offers options including a collapsible buttstock that makes it easier to fit a particular situation,” Kendrick added, noting it provides flexibility for a woman to use. “A shotgun isn’t something a 5’2” woman may want to take the time to practice with, and shotguns have a lower rate of fire. An AR-15 can be managed better, and can allow the shooter to follow up with multiple shots if necessary.”

John J. Motil, general manager of the Tactical Defense Institute, shared much of the sentiment shotguns can be “awesome” for home defense when wielded by a large-framed individual who is used to the recoil. He also warned it can result in serious “over-penetration” in an urban setting.

“Buckshot requires it be patterned at the various distances an individual may encounter inside or even outside their home,” Motil further emphasized.

Gun shop owners and managers should consider these points when preparing sales staff. Other factors might include the customer’s type of house — even when it was built — when directing someone to what may be best suited to their needs.

In other words, a one-size-fits-all approach may not be the answer.

THE CASE FOR SHOTGUNS

There are still those who suggest shotguns could be a good choice in older homes with wet plaster walls and long hallways.

“Shotguns offer superior stopping power with generally lower penetration than other options like pistols and rifles,” suggested Linda Powell, director of media relations at Mossberg. “Shotguns can be an affordable option, particularly pump actions, and there is a wide range of shotshells available. And many defensive shotguns offer the ability to customize or add accessories based on your individual needs. Overall, the shotgun is a versatile home-defense option.”

“Many defensive shotguns offer the ability to customize or add accessories based on your individual needs. Overall, the shotgun is a versatile home-defense option.”

Linda Powell • Director of Media Relations
O.F. Mossberg & Sons

Mossberg now offers an extensive line of personal/home defense options including semi-autos like the 940 Pro Tactical/SA-20; pump-action models including the 590A1/590/500/Maverick 88; and even over-and-under options with the Silver Reserve.

“Ultimately, the most important features are reliability and durability; shotguns that have been proven in the field,” added Powell.

Shotguns were also touted as the strong option at Arnzen Arms in Eden Prairie, Minn., where owner Daniel Arnzen recommends either a semi-auto shotgun, such as the Benelli M2, or a pump shotgun like the Remington 870 for the budget-conscious.

“We recommend 12-gauge





Expert witness Barret Kendrick prefers the versatile footprint of an AR-15 in home-defense applications. A collapsible buttstock allows for adaptability in close-quarter confrontations, while its lighter weight will appeal to smaller-framed individuals.

shotguns with 3" chambers so they can chamber buckshot, slugs or other self-defense loads," Arnzen advised.

SEMI-AUTO OPTIONS

Despite the high praise for shotguns, Arnzen said there are still times when a semi-automatic rifle can also be a good option.

"For home defense rifles, a 9mm carbine such as the JP-5 or any AR-15 would also be recommended," Arnzen added. "We strongly recommend silencers for both of these options, as well as for handguns, due to the risk of hearing damage when firing indoors with no ear protection."

"AR-15s are ergonomically easier to hold and manipulate," Motil continued. "It allows for higher ammunition capacity and a loaded chamber, which isn't recommended with a shotgun."

Semi-autos also offer more ammunition selection options and can be fitted with a variety of accessories including lights and suppressors that can make the firearms more adaptable to home and personal defense.

OTHER LONG-GUN OPTIONS

When it comes to home defense, any long gun can be used in a pinch, but it's far from recommended today. Unless

someone needs to defend a ranch on the frontier, bolt-action military surplus rifles and most hunting rifles may be ill-suited to the task. Those firearms are designed for long-distance shooting and aren't ideal within a confined space.

Shorter lever actions are an option, but there are still some caveats, warned Motil.

"If all I had was a lever gun then I would use it, but I've personally short-stroked the lever and seen others do the same causing a malfunction," he explained.

"We recommend 12-gauge shotguns with 3" chambers so they can chamber buckshot, slugs or other self-defense loads."

Daniel Arnzen • Owner
Arnzen Arms
Eden Prairie, Minn.

Motil also acknowledged, "All the lever-gun manufacturers are offering a tactical version with M-LOK forends and rails on the receiver now, so I guess they're here to stay. I'd probably skip the .45-70 version unless I'm in bear country."

TAILORED TO THE NEED

The best option for personal and home defense may simply come down to the situation. Thus, a single long gun may not even address every scenario.

"Inside the home, a shotgun is impossible to beat," said the manager at Hux Customs in



Daniel
Defense
DD4 RIII

Chubbuck, Idaho [name withheld by request]. But he added, “As soon as you step outside the door, the AR is the firearm of choice for most. High capacity, low recoil and better range can be reached if needed.”

Picking the right firearm — as well as recommending the right option to customers — is about understanding the house and property, the customer and their skill and/or comfort zone.

“You’re responsible for every projectile that comes out of your

firearm,” stated Amie Moore, affiliate marketing manager at Bear Creek Arsenal in Sanford, N.C. “You need to know what your range is, what you are capable of in times of high stress and what is behind your target. You don’t want to shoot at a robber and possibly hit walls behind them where other family members would be. There isn’t a one-size-fits-all solution. Having a variety of options is key and knowing what to do/expect and training with all of them is important.” **SI**



Springfield
Armory Kuna
9mm Pistol

“There isn’t a one-size-fits-all solution. Having a variety of options is key and knowing what to do/expect and training with all of them is important.”

Amie Moore
Affiliate Marketing Manager
Bear Creek Arsenal

A Streamlight Speedlocker storage case, a black and grey rugged case with a textured front, resting on a brown leather bag.

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By Nancy Keaton

Eye/Ear Protection: **Necessity, Not Accessory**

The dad was mad. He bought his teenage son a gun for Christmas and posted a picture of the son shooting his new gun in their backyard online, but the son wasn't wearing any eye or ear protection.

The dad got mad because people commented about the lack of eye and ear safety. He replied safety equipment wasn't necessary because the gun had less than 10 rounds fired through it.

A common misconception from people who have "been shooting all their lives" is eye and ear protection is not needed outside of a gun range. However, my son shot a new rifle that literally fell apart the first time

"... only about half of target shooters wear hearing protection all the time when target practicing ..."

**American Speech-
Language-Hearing
Association**

he shot it. Anything can go wrong at any time and by the time it does, it's too late to put on protection. It's like when you get in a car wreck: you don't have time to see it coming and then put on your seatbelt.

The dad also didn't consider a ricochet. He didn't consider debris. He didn't consider anything he had never personally experienced. Sadly, instead of thanking people for educating him, he chose to defend a bad practice that would teach his son bad — and dangerous — habits.

AN AVOIDABLE LOSS

In addition to concerns over injuries, how many people have hearing loss due to unprotected shooting? Most people don't even think about it affecting them since they only shoot "once in a while." They don't understand temporary hearing loss can lead to permanent hearing loss.

According to information found on the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) website, "... only about half of target shooters wear hearing protection all the time when target practicing ..."



Wiley X JAKL

ASHA further noted, "People who do not wear hearing protection while shooting — or who do not wear it properly — can suffer hearing loss or ringing in their ears (known as tinnitus) with as little as one shot."

When discussing the decibel level that can risk hearing damage, ASHA states it is "primarily for occupational noise exposures," but continues, "The ear does not differentiate between occupational and recreational noise."

This is an excellent point too many shooters often overlook. ASHA says we don't have to stop shooting; we simply need to protect our ears with hearing protection that fits well (which also is very important — using something just because it's labeled as "protection" but does not fit well is as bad as using nothing). For those with indoor facilities, recommend doubling up while at the range (with passive and active hearing protectors) and/or using a suppressor where legal and permissible.

"It's always cost first and foremost. They always want to know the cost and why this one is more expensive than the other."

Vince Nguyen
Rainier Arms Firearms Academy
Wichita, Kan.

CAN WE DO BETTER?

Unfortunately, the industry may not be helping to dispel these myths or to make it very clear eye and ear protection is a necessity, not just an accessory.

Prepping for this article, I spent hours perusing websites looking for information and links to eye and ear protection. Most of the time, if there was anything at all, these products were simply listed under "accessories." (In my opinion, not listing this information on the landing page can make eye and ear protection seem like they are not a priority or even a necessity.)

Proper ear protection can also help make or break a new shooter's first experience. The unexpected

noise can immediately turn people off. I've heard the comment many times from people who said the sound scared them so badly they never wanted anything more to do with guns. We have to do better than this if we want new shooters to stay.

EYE PROTECTION

Eye protection is much easier. It's not as hard to find something that fits comfortably. There aren't as many options because it's pretty straightforward, but it doesn't make it any less important than ear protection.



Walker's Razor Slim Electronic

Ear Muffs - Duck Camo

New shooters especially may not realize they can utilize their regular prescription glasses (if rated appropriately), safety glasses over their prescription glasses, safety glasses made with their prescription or glasses with interchangeable lenses.

It's a complicated world retailers can clarify for their customers and help them learn more about in-depth. Vince Nguyen, with Rainier Arms Firearms Academy in Wichita, Kan., shared the most common question he gets from customers

concerning eye and ear protection.

"It's always cost first and foremost," he replied. "They always want to know the cost and why this one is more expensive than the other. Since we're a firearms academy, and we do train here, we prefer electronic ear protection — so we don't have to yell at each other."

Nguyen keeps education at the forefront of these conversations but doesn't get too much into the "nitty gritty" of the technology.

"We educate people and give the best information we can. Of course, we don't know the specific details like circuitry; we can only tell them what the label states," he said. "But we give them pretty thorough information about eye and ear protection here."



Radians Ducks Unlimited

Full Frame Shooting Glasses

According to Nguyen, the best-selling brands at his facility are a tie between Savior Equipment and Walker's for electronic ear protection.

"It's because they're about the same price, roughly \$40 to \$60," he rationalized.

Nguyen noted that Savior Equipment is relatively new to the electronic ear protection world. Its Apollo Electronic Sound Suppressors have cooling gel ear pads for comfort and come in 12 colors.

TOP SELLERS FROM TWO PROMINENT RETAILERS

I then looked at a few websites to see what the most popular brands of eye and ear protection are. Here's what I found:

- **Palmetto State Armory:** The top-three best-selling earmuffs all

came from Walker's. In order, they are: 1) Walker's Razor Slim Shooter Electronic Folding Muff Series; 2) Walker's Game Ear Razor Slim Electronic Quad Muff; 3) Walker's Game Ear Razor Slim 27 dB Over the Head Digital Passive Earmuff.

Additionally, the three best-selling earbuds at Palmetto also came from Walker: 1) Walker's Game Ear 25 dB Silencer Ear Buds; 2) Walker's Game Ear Ultra BTE 22 dB Rechargeable Electronic Hearing Enhancer; 3) Walker's Game Ear Ultra Ear BTE Electronic Hearing Enhancer.

The top three eye protection products are: 1) Walker's Safety Glasses; 2) Peltor Sport Over the Glass Safety Eyewear; 3) Howard Leight Vapor II Black Frame/Clear Lens/Anti-Fog.

- **MidwayUSA:** It is a similar story at MidwayUSA, with Walker's at the top of the best-selling ear protectors. The top three are: 1) Walker's Silencer 2.0 Bluetooth Electronic Ear Plugs; 2) Walker's Silencer Electronic Ear Plugs;

With each gun sale, ask customers if they have good, comfortable eye and ear protection. If not, find out what kind of shooting they are planning to do, and in what environment so you can direct them to the appropriate items.

- 3) Walker's Razor Slim Low Profile Electronic Ear Muffs with Free Walkie Talkie.

The top three eye protection brands and products at MidwayUSA are: 1) Walker's Razor Slim XTRM Electronic Ear Muffs with Clear Lens Shooting Glasses; 2) Radians RSG Interchangeable Shooting Glasses Clear, Orange and Amber Lenses; 3) Walker's Sport Shooting Glasses Kit.

(Side note: According to the March 2025 Recap by A Girl & A Gun, Walker's ear protection was also the most popular choice among women who participated in the 2024 National Conference. Other popular brands included Howard Leight, AXIL, AKT1 Sport and Peltor.)

A NECESSITY, NOT AN ACCESSORY

It's important to take the above information with a caveat: Customers need to make their decision on more than what sells best; they should still make sure the product is what works best and is comfortable for them.

I know it can be difficult. I also know it can be frustrating for everyone to find something they like. I'm petite and many earmuffs are too big and go too far below my ears to seal properly and they allow too much noise in. I have almost as many brands and types of hearing protection as I do holsters.

Earmuffs can be uncomfortable if they have to be worn for long periods of time. The shooter should wear double ear protection when shooting indoors. How earmuffs fit may be different when they are shooting a long gun. Maybe they've tried one or two types of hearing protection and didn't really like them but didn't think there were other options.

So how can retailers provide this important information more clearly? With each gun sale, ask customers if they have good, comfortable eye and ear protection. If not, find out what kind of shooting they are planning to do, and in what environment so you can direct them to the appropriate items. Make sure they know they may have a lot of options and may need

Customers need to make their decision on more than what sells best; they should still make sure the product is what works best and is comfortable for them.



ISOtunes Sport Advance BT

to try a few different styles and brands before they find the one they really like and fits them best.

Then, create a stand-out display area for eye and ear protection — not just on a side or in a back corner like a “nice-to-have.” Show they are important by giving them the space and attention they should have.

If your store has a blog, write about the subject. Make a separate and obvious web page, labeling the eye and ear products specifically.

If we want shooters, new and those “who have been shooting all their lives,” to take eye and hearing protection seriously in every shooting circumstance, we need to make sure these items are seen for what they truly are — a necessity, not an accessory. **SI**



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GAME PLAN FOR FALL

Gear, Growth & Strategy In Pivotal Season For Hunting

By Bethany Beathard

The fall hunting season represents a foundation for the outdoor industry, both in revenue generation and in shaping long-term consumer

engagement. As hunters prepare to hit the field, dealers and manufacturers across the U.S. enter their most critical sales window of the year.

From gear rollouts to last-minute product restocks, this is when customer loyalty can be won or lost. Regionally, the season brings diverse demand curves. Western markets focus on big-game hunting with a strong interest in long-range optics, lightweight packs and precision firearms. In the East and Midwest, whitetail and waterfowl dominate sales, driving demand for treestands, blinds, decoys and ammunition.

Dealers must adjust with localized strategies and product mixes tailored to each market's unique needs.

ADAPTING TO THE MARKET

When it comes to the fall 2025 season, dealers across the country are noticing distinct regional patterns in what hunters are buying and why. Out West, big-game hunters have a strong focus on long-range shooting and reliable, high-powered rifles. Outdoor Pro Shop LLC, in Pasadena, Md., does brisk business with hunters who pursue game out West.

"We're seeing a strong uptick in Western hunting sales, particularly in high-powered rifles," said Kevin Cook, owner/

operator. "Popular choices among our customers include 6.5 Creedmoor, .300 Win. Mag. and 28 Nosler — all are known for their long-range performance and stopping power on big game."

In the north, particularly Maryland, Cook has noted a growing demand for straight-wall cartridges, like the .350 Legend and .450 Bushmaster.

"This shift is largely driven by tightening hunting regulations that limit the use of traditional rifle calibers. Hunters are adapting, and we're here to make sure they have the gear they need to stay compliant and successful in the field," he added.

Meanwhile, on the eastern side of the country, whitetail and waterfowl hunting are holding strong, and so is the growing youth market.

"We have seen an increase across the board for youth firearm sales in the past couple of years. The numbers are holding strong with waterfowl and whitetail firearms and gear," shared Josh Clark from South Georgia Outdoors in Cairo, Ga.

Retailers focused on eastern markets are also seeing steady demand for treestands, blinds, decoys and calls as hunters continue to adapt to habitat changes and pressure on public and private lands.

On the e-commerce front, online marketplaces are stepping up to meet evolving consumer expectations.

"As the upcoming fall hunting season approaches, trends show hunters prioritizing products from established, trusted brands with verified reviews and direct communication channels," said Marcus Johnson, Everest chief of staff. "On our marketplace, hunters can confidently

research, learn and trust that they're purchasing authentic, reliable gear, not knockoffs. With the ability to connect directly with brands for questions or support, hunters can ensure their equipment meets the demands of the wild."

Dealers nationwide are adapting quickly, leaning into local market trends and focusing on customer trust, product education and quality gear to make the most of the upcoming season.

HUNTING INDUSTRY TRENDS & GROWTH AREAS

Understanding where the market is heading is critical for dealers and manufacturers aiming to stay competitive. In this post-Covid era and with the new tariffs, the outdoor industry must adapt to the changes. Additionally, as the hunting community diversifies and customer expectations evolve, several trends and product categories are emerging as key growth drivers.

Technology continues to transform how hunters prepare, scout and engage in the field, and these innovations are directly shaping consumer buying behavior. Developments in optics, rangefinders and GPS-integrated tracking devices are elevating the importance of high-performance gear.

E-scouting tools and mobile apps like onXHunt and HuntStand have become standard, allowing hunters to plan and adapt digitally in real-time. Also, with the advancements of satellite GPS, units from companies like Garmin now

THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES LIE IN STAYING FLEXIBLE, INVESTING IN EDUCATION AND OFFERING TRUSTED GEAR THAT MEETS THE EVOLVING NEEDS OF TODAY'S DIVERSE HUNTING COMMUNITY.

”

allow hunters to track dogs or stay connected in the deep backcountry.

In the gear and apparel segment, performance-driven demands are reshaping what hunters expect from their clothing and equipment. Lightweight, technical apparel featuring synthetic insulation, moisture-wicking fabrics and UV protection is becoming the norm across climates and regions.

Products combining scent control with weather resistance, such as waterproof outerwear and odor-neutralizing base layers, are seeing particularly strong demand from whitetail and predator hunters. (I have also noticed an increase in hunters choosing solid natural colors for clothing, especially in the West.)

For the eastern woods hunters, it seems vintage camo patterns are making a comeback. Meanwhile, modern hunting packs offering modular storage, hydration compatibility and silent operation continue to gain popularity as hunters prioritize comfort, accessibility and stealth.

While ammunition availability has improved since the shortages of recent years, pricing remains a concern among buyers, prompting dealers to find creative ways to add value.

New firearm models with modular designs, adjustable stocks and lightweight chassis systems are also gaining traction, appealing to hunters seeking customizable options. Dealers who


respond with informed inventory strategies and a commitment to education and customer engagement will be best positioned to meet the needs of the modern hunter.

EXPANDING NEW BUSINESS

As the hunting industry evolves, dealers are finding new ways to grow by tapping into rising markets like youth and women hunters. Offering gear tailored for smaller frames, beginner-friendly firearms and educational programs are just a few ways retailers are capitalizing on these expanding categories.

Events like range days, hunter education seminars and in-store demos are proving to be strong tools for boosting customer engagement and loyalty. E-commerce is playing a bigger role than ever, with digital marketing, online sales and direct-to-customer communication now essential parts of the retail playbook.

Looking ahead to this fall hunting season, the challenge remains for the industry (and dealers) to turn "interest" into "activation." In addition, conservation and regulatory changes — such as updates on access to public lands and shifts in bag limits — will shape how the season plays out for hunters and retailers alike.

Across the board, professionals agree the biggest opportunities lie in staying flexible, investing in education and offering trusted gear that meets the evolving needs of today's diverse hunting community. 

NEW PRODUCTS

TO VIEW HUNDREDS OF PRODUCTS
FEATURED IN PAST ISSUES, VISIT:

SHOOTINGINDUSTRY.COM/CATEGORY/FIRST-LOOK

By Jenna Buckley



HORNADY MFG. CO.

(800) 338-3220
hornady.com

With the **3-IN-1 POWER CASE TRIMMER** from Hornady, brass cases are quickly trimmed, chamfered and deburred. It is capable of trimming brass from .22 to .30 calibers and case lengths from 1.45" to 3.5". The combination of macro and micro adjustment features provides quick and exacting adjustments down to 0.001". The case length click adjustment micro-dial ensures settings are locked in and guarantees quick and consistent trimming. Additional features include a removable shavings tray, mount-on trimmer bin and 2,000 RPM motor speed.



SMITH & WESSON BRANDS INC.

(800) 331-0852
smith-wesson.com

The latest edition to S&W's Model 1854 Series, the **.45-70** rifle, is equipped with a 5.75" Picatinny base for optics mounting, an adjustable XS Sights ghost ring rear sight, a gold bead front sight and a fixed magazine tube. The forend on the stainless-steel model offers three M-LOK-compatible slots. The Model 1854 Series provides the perfect blend of heritage and innovation. Rifles in the 1854 Series have a seven-round capacity, forged 416 stainless steel receiver, 20" stainless steel barrel with thread pattern for suppressor use, a large loop lever for smooth operation and flat trigger design.



PISTOLERO

CIMARRON FIREARMS

(877) 749-4861
cimarron-firearms.com

Cimarron Firearms' **LIGHTNING** and **PISTOLERO** revolvers are now available in 9mm. The Lightning comes with a fluted .38 Special cylinder and a 9mm smooth, or non-fluted, cylinder, 3.5"- or 4.75"-barrel length and a standard blue and case-hardened finish with smooth walnut grips. The Pistolero, also offered with dual cylinders, is styled with a brass backstrap and trigger guard, 4.75"-barrel, color case-hardened frame in standard blue and smooth walnut grips.



TASMANIAN TIGER USA

(800) 259-5962
tasmaniantigerusa.com

From Tasmanian Tiger, the **TT MODULAR MEDIC PACK 38** is designed for emergency medics and tactical operators. Featuring 38 liters of storage, the backpack is engineered to accommodate a full range of medical supplies with two front pockets, a large lid compartment for extra storage and a fully expandable main compartment. Six hook-and-loop fastened transparent pouches inside allow for rapid identification and retrieval of essential gear. CORDURA 700 den fabric offers superior abrasion resistance, and the padded back carrying system ensures ergonomic support. Its removable 38mm (1.5") webbing hip belt provides additional stability for heavy loads. The pack weighs 7.5 lbs. and measures 24H" x 11W" x 8D".



KUIU

(800) 648-9717
kuiu.com

The **PRO G3 BINO HARNESS** from KUIU integrates a new patent-pending Rail-Lock accessory connection system, a quiet waterproof softshell fabric with a fleece-lined interior and redesigned pocketing for improved functionality. At the core of the PRO G3 Bino Harness is a structured pouch with a forward-folding lid made from ultra-quiet fleece-lined softshell fabric. The pouch is equipped with a waterproof/dustproof membrane, ensuring optics remain dry, clean and clear, even in the harshest conditions. The system also includes stackable foam shims, enabling precise height adjustment to ensure optimal positioning of binoculars within the pouch.



MUCK BOOT COMPANY

(855) 377-2668
muckbootcompany.com

Muck Boot Company now offers its **DUCK CAMO** print in a variety of waterproof footwear styles. For women, the Duck Camo pattern is offered in the Muckster II Mid, Originals Ankle and Muckster Lite Clog. In men's styles, the Excursion Originals, Outscape Max and Muckster Lite Clog are now available in Duck Camo. The kids' version of the Muckster Lite Clog also now includes a Duck Camo option.

DEAD AIR SILENCERS

(801) 857-4232
deadairsilencers.com



The **MOJAVE 45** suppressor from Dead Air Silencers is built around its patent-pending Triskelion Gas Management System that delivers a stronger and lighter suppressor optimally tuned for enhanced sound reduction at the muzzle and the ear. It's compatible with multiple calibers and platforms and suitable for use on tilt and fixed barrels across select full-auto and semi-auto systems. Adding or removing the front module allows the user to prioritize size/weight and sound reduction for changing needs and applications. The Mojave 45 is offered in black or FDE (pictured) Cerakote finishes and a long (8.6", 12.7 oz.) or short (6.8", 10.44 oz.) version.

CALDWELL

(833) 784-5520
caldwellshooting.com

From Caldwell, the **CLAYCOPTER** target system includes a motorized handheld launcher that shoots one or two biodegradable discs, called ClayCopters, to distances of up to 100 yards. The portable launcher is lightweight (3 lbs.) and packs the same power of a traditional electric thrower into a handheld motorized design small enough to fit in a range bag or backpack. ClayCopter target discs (sold separately) are 70% lighter than traditional clays, are designed to break only when shot and have a unique flight pattern that mimics real game flight. The ClayCopter launcher has an integral high-speed motor capable of spinning the target discs up to 15,000 rpm.



LASER AMMO

(516) 858-1262
laserammo.com

The **SMOKELESS RANGE 3.0** simulator from Laser Ammo enhances the visual experience with its new menu design, now rendered natively at 1080p over the previous 720p. The addition of the "Favorites Page" allows users to easily collect and access their most-used drills, while its new ability to store multiple laser offsets enables an effortless switch between different laser trainers. Additionally, all 10 core drills have been improved with visual and gameplay upgrades. The Target Shooting, Transitional, Tracking and Moving drills now have access to all Media Manager targets, allowing users to easily choose between many different targets. To further elevate solo training, the new "Get Ready Timer" makes for an efficient setup process.



BLACK RAIN ORDNANCE

(888) 836-2620
blackrainordnance.com

The **BRO-22 SERIES** from Black Rain Ordnance offers a lightweight, high-performance platform designed for versatility and precision in a .22-caliber firearm. Ideal for training, plinking or small-game hunting, the rifles combine advanced materials and customizable features. The Series consists of nine models: BRO-SPORTSMAN, BRO-SPORTSMAN+, BRO-HUNTER, BRO-PRO-AM, BRO-DELUXE-STANDARD, BRO-DELUXE-CLASSIC, BRO-DELUXE, BRO-EXPERT and BRO-PROFESSIONAL.

NEW PRODUCTS



KELTEC

(800) 515-9983
keltecweapons.com

From KelTec, the **10MM SUB2000** folding carbine rifle can twist-and-fold in either direction in a single motion, without removing optics and is offered with GLOCK 20 magazines. It also supports various third-party stick and drum magazine options. It features a 16.25" threaded barrel, blowback action, M-LOK handguard and adjustable sights. The OAL is 29.2" (16.15" folded) and it weighs 5.6 lbs. (unloaded).

PRIMARY ARMS

(713) 344-9600
primaryarms.com

The **SLX MD-21** advanced micro dot sight from Primary Arms is lightweight, rugged and features upgraded mounting hardware. The upgraded LED emitter offers complete night vision compatibility and a true Red Dot Bright reticle with an ultra-long runtime. Autolive technology shuts off the reticle when no motion is detected for two minutes and immediately turns on when it is picked up. The **GLX MD-21S** high-performance micro dot optic is built for agility and precision. An advanced solar failsafe system supplements a power supply to ensure the optic operates with maximum runtime. It features fully upgraded lenses, an ultra-bright emitter, intuitive push-button controls, a heavy-duty mounting system and Autolive technology.



SLX MD-21



GFORCE ARMS

gforcearms.com

The **12HAMMER** from GForce Arms efficiently cycles light 7.5 shot loads up to 3" T-shot and steel and accommodates almost any ammunition. Key features of the 12HAMMER include a gas-operated buffer tube system; 18.5" full steel barrel; Benelli mobile choke system (comes with five factory chokes: CYL, IMP CYL, MOD, IMP MOD and FULL); a T6-7075 hardened aluminum upper receiver and polymer lower receiver; and adjustable length from 31.1" to 48.2". The 12HAMMER weighs 8.4 lbs.



FLEX-DARK

FLEX-S-DARK

SPYPOINT

(888) 779-7646
spypoint.com

SPYPOINT introduces two cellular trail cameras to its FLEX series: the **FLEX-DARK** and the **FLEX-S-DARK**. The FLEX-DARK delivers 40MP photos and 1080p videos with sound to the SPYPOINT app. It features a 100' flash and detection range, a 0.3-second trigger speed and no-glow and low-glow LED night vision options. The FLEX-S-DARK features all the benefits of the FLEX-DARK, plus on-demand photo and video requests and a built-in solar panel and internal lithium battery that replaces up to 1,000 standard AA batteries. An optional LIT-22 rechargeable lithium battery pack or eight AA batteries can be used to extend battery life even longer.



SAFARILAND

(800) 347-1200
safariland.com

Safariland expands its **DUTY HOLSTER FITS FOR THE STACCATO HD IN THE 6000 SERIES** for 4"-barrel models (4.5"-variant coming soon). Available in all standard finishes, including Cordura patterns, each holster is designed to accommodate firearms equipped with red dot sights and incorporates Safariland's Automatic Locking System (ALS), which works in tandem with the trusted Self-Locking System (SLS) to provide secure retention and fast access. The ALS mechanism is operated with the thumb, allowing for a smooth, intuitive draw. Unlike traditional holsters, there is no need for any twisting or complicated maneuvers to release the firearm from the holster. This streamlined system is ideal for law enforcement and professionals who require quick, reliable access to their firearms under pressure.



CCI AMMUNITION

(866) 286-7436
cci-ammunition.com

UPPERCUT .22 WMR from CCI Ammunition features a 40-grain jacketed hollowpoint bullet (JHP) with nose skiving, which initiates full and reliable expansion across all platforms. It retains the weight needed to hit critical penetration depths.



KIFARU

(307) 370-7981
kifaru.net

Kifaru's **MESA HARNESS** features a contoured shape and spacer mesh lining to reduce pressure points and wick moisture. Smooth edges prevent rubbing and chafing during extended wear, while PALS attachment points keep essential tools within easy reach. The Squadron laminate construction provides a stable base, eliminating shifting or bouncing and ensuring optics stay in place. With a streamlined strap system and quick-detach buckles, the Mesa Harness allows for quick adjustments and fast removal. The Mesa Harness weighs 6.7 oz., and is available in Ranger Green, Coyote Brown and Black Multicam.



BLASER GROUP

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

The Blaser **FBX** competition shotgun with fat body receiver delivers balance and weight distribution for an effortless swing and fatigue-free shooting. The FBX balancer system is integrated into the forend for easy, customizable weight distribution. The FBX also features the Blaser IBS Anti-Double System and Ejection Ball System for reliable function and fast shot sequence. The receiver is a monocoque design with detachable trigger unit for easy maintenance. The steeper pistol grip design with optimized palm swell increases control of the gun before and during shooting and allows the hand to absorb part of the recoil. It is available in a sporting stock configuration and with an adjustable comb paired with a 12-GA low-rib competition barrel.



SK GUNS

(844) 475-4867
skguns.com

SK Guns launches the next edition of its collaboration with Agency Arms, Stan Chen Customs and color casing by "Doug." The **AGENT ECLIPSE AOS 1911** is offered in 9mm and .45 ACP, and para-ported and chunk-ported versions. The Agent Eclipse has three variations of REACTIV Maxx grips. Each model includes an AOS optic plate (compatible with the RMR/SRO A14B footprint). The two-tone Eclipse boasts satin-black nitride controls, slide and barrel. An iron sight cover plate is also provided in the same satin finish for shooters who prefer not to use optics. Additional features include aggressive serrations; high polish on the frame, mainspring housing and magwell; Wolff reduced recoil springs; XP firing pin springs; Picatinny rail; and 1:16" twist rate.

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NEW PRODUCTS



LEUPOLD & STEVENS INC.

(800) 538-7653
leupold.com

Leupold & Stevens launches **DAYLIGHT MAX** lens technology to its Performance Eyewear line. The lenses feature optimized, low-light polarization that deliver superior clarity and contrast. A silver mirror finish hides its yellow, daylight base. Purpose built for all-day wear, the lightweight polycarbonate construction reduces fatigue. Other key features include Leupold's Guard-ion hydrophobic coating that repels dirt, water and fingerprints. DiamondCoat-hardened lenses stand up to scratches, while a no-slip bridge with soft-touch rubber pads delivers all-day comfort and stability. Daylight Max lenses will be available across six of Leupold's Performance Eyewear frames: Switchback, DeSoto, Cheyenne, Bridger, Becnara and Tracer.

TAURUS USA

(800) 327-3776
taurususa.com

The **TAURUS 58** aluminum-frame, .380 ACP pistol with carry-friendly design delivers 15-round magazine capacity and several standout features. The frame offers durability without added bulk, and the DA/SA trigger delivers versatility for a range of carry and shooting styles. Its ambidextrous safety and de-cocker enable added control without compromising the slim profile, and it has an integrated front sight and a drift-adjustable rear sight. The Taurus 58 is available in black and stainless finishes.



BE “RIDICULOUSLY EASY” TO DO BUSINESS WITH

The keynote speaker on the Summit's first day was customer experience expert and consultant David Avrin, who shared customers are seeking out brands that are “ridiculously easy to do business with.”

Avrin contended it's about quality at the “beginning of the day” — which gets your brand or product into the market — but your competitive advantage is what's going to matter at the “end of the day,” securing the sale.

As we all know, customers are impatient these days. Avrin said the most important things to customers today are speed of delivery, quick process to achieve desired outcome and convenience. With price and quality being similar, it's going to be on the margins where brands win.

Avrin stated the value of a “product-centric” approach (“how much stuff can we sell them?”) pales in comparison to a “customer-centric” mindset (“how many ways can we enhance their lives?”). Find ways to make your brand preferable over others — customers are looking for convenience. (Think: range check-in, online buying, navigating the store, etc.)

NORMALIZING THE TOPIC OF SUICIDE

Showcasing leadership in action, NSSF set aside half of the Summit's second day to discuss the topic of suicide. This topic has, at times, been an uncomfortable one for the firearms industry to talk about. But the conversation is being spearheaded by like-minded individuals and organizations, and this Summit represented a continuation of that effort.

Bartozzi opened the conversation by having a sit-down with Dr. Matt Miller, executive director for VA Suicide Prevention for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Dr. Miller shared more than 6,000 veterans die by suicide each year (17+ each day). In the majority of cases, close to 75%, a firearm is used. But Dr. Miller was quick to point out the difference between “why” and “how” when talking

about firearms.

“Firearms are not a cause; they can weaponize dark thoughts and feelings at a particular time with a high degree of lethality,” he said. “They're not a ‘why’ when talking about suicide and suicide prevention. They're a ‘how.’”

While veterans statistically are at a greater risk of suicide by firearm, its impact is wide-reaching among civilians, as well. Dr. Miller shared secure storage is a key aspect of suicide prevention — creating time and space between an individual in a dark moment and a firearm/ammunition can be life-saving. Additionally, Dr. Miller called attention to the need of teaching both veterans and civilians how to perform a “risk calculus” and act when the threat is high.



Your competitive advantage is what's going to matter at the 'end of the day,' securing the sale.

During this discussion, Dr. Miller identified four areas where businesses can help from a messaging perspective: normalizing awareness of “dark periods” in life; teaching others the risk calculus; employ more secure storage strategies; and the need for a better messenger — someone viewed as attractive, trustworthy and an expert — to speak the message.

This is where brands can build on their connections with customers and lead the way in this solemn endeavor.

RETAILERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Dr. Emmy Betz, Jacquelyn Clark (co-owner of Bristlecone Shooting, Training & Retain Center in Lakewood, Colo.) and Caleb Morse (owner of The Rustic Renegade in Lafayette, La.), chaired a panel discussion on programs they're involved in and how other dealers can serve their communities.

Dr. Betz, an ER physician and researcher for the Univ. of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, reiterated Dr. Miller's assertion above: We need to normalize the message, emphasize hope and store firearms securely to prevent unauthorized access.

Clark recounted the nearly 10-year journey Bristlecone Shooting took to get involved with the Pause to Protect program and the successful launch of VetStore at Bristlecone in collaboration with the University of Colorado and the VA. Since then, Bristlecone has worked with other FFLs to create SOPs, training and a blueprint for them to follow with their teams. Clark shared this effort has fostered a tighter bond between ownership and employees, who value the work being done to serve others.

Morse launched The Armory Project in 2021, with three retailers interested in providing temporary storage to those who needed it. A stumbling block for some retailers was the concern of liability — what if a customer hurts himself after taking his guns back? Morse and a coalition supporting The Armory Project worked together with Louisiana state legislators, who passed legislation absolving FFL dealers from liability. As a result of this success, groups in other states are trying to pass similar laws.

In another panel discussion, NSSF Senior Director, Communications Bill Brassard and Waco Hoover, founder of IMPCT Group and chair of the American Legion's “Be The One” suicide prevention program, discussed the topic of suicide prevention and brand value.

In the final session of the 2025 NSSF Marketing & Leadership Summit, Bartozzi and Dr. Miller returned to the stage to close out the discussion of suicide and engage in a Q&A segment with attendees.

In his concluding remarks, Bartozzi shared a phrase that exemplifies his passion for this topic: “No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.”

Each of our businesses has a leadership role to play — and there's no better time than the present to take up the mantle. **SI**

NSSF MARKETING & LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

BY JADE MOLDAE

TAKEAWAYS FROM “POWERFUL” NSSF SUMMIT

Last month, scores of marketing professionals from around the firearms industry — representing manufacturers, wholesalers, importers, advertising agencies, organizations, brick-and-mortar retail stores, ranges and more — convened in Clearwater, Fla., for the 2025 NSSF Marketing & Leadership Summit. Attendees participated in two days of engaging education, networking and ideation at the picturesque Opal Sol Resort.

NSSF President and CEO Joe Bartozzi set the tone for the event during his remarks to open the Summit, sharing a purposeful phrase coined and exemplified by *Shooting Industry* Publisher Emeritus Russ Thurman: “If you can’t communicate, you can’t lead.” Bartozzi challenged those in attendance to use their influence as marketers to elevate the industry’s reach in welcoming and connecting with current and prospective consumers.

TRUST, AUTHENTICITY MATTER

“Trust” was a recurrent theme throughout the NSSF Marketing & Leadership Summit.

The opening session featured an expert on the topic of trust, David Horsager — who asked attendees at the outset: “The question everyone is asking: Can I trust you?” Horsager argued everything is built on the value of trust — it can’t be simply stated, it’s earned.

From a retail perspective, Horsager highlighted a point that will be familiar to *SI* readers: Those business owners who take the time to “sit on the tailgate” and get to know a customer at the point of sale will be more successful in the long term.

“Don’t try to sell a gun for a moment,” he said. “Build a relationship for life.”

In the following session, Rob Southwick of Southwick Associates presented how the industry’s marketing messages can be more effective in reaching new groups. Southwick shared recent research revealed millions of people who are not in our traditional market want to try the shooting sports, but don’t know how to get started.

“This is not a DEI project, it’s a growing-the-business project. People want to join our ranks. They’re interested in spending money with us,” Southwick told attendees.

“Trust” was mentioned several times in Southwick’s presentation, with the onus on our industry to build trust with these prospective customers to get them out on the range and into retail stores.

Southwick contended one of the ways to build trust is taking the fear out of the unknown. Safety needs to be emphasized and reinforced before and during visits to the range.

Research has shown potential first-time users prefer marketing imagery that show a safe and welcoming atmosphere. Images depicting a clear student-

Dr. Emmy Betz (right) introduces Caleb Morse and Jacquelyn Clark during a panel discussion about how their work in suicide prevention is saving lives, while changing the culture of their businesses.

instructor/expert relationship or an organized setting scored better than an individual aiming a firearm into the void.

Another insightful session focused on R3 communications for Black gun owners, hosted by NSSF Director of Research Salam Fatohi and Breland Hillman, director of account management at JMI, who NSSF partnered with to produce the R3 Communications Toolkit for Black Gun Owners through a Multi-State Conservation Grant.

One significant takeaway took place during the Q&A segment at the conclusion of the presentation, with one of the Summit attendees asked Hillman (who is Black and a new participant in the firearms space) if there is any marketing imagery he’s seen that wasn’t appealing to him. His answer was compelling and reinforced the findings from Southwick’s earlier session.



One of the ways to build trust is taking the fear out of the unknown. Safety needs to be emphasized and reinforced before and during visits to the range.

“It’s less of what I see [in an ad] — it’s what I don’t see. I want to feel safe. Even if the image has someone who doesn’t look like me — it’s someone who is welcoming. It shows me this is a safe space to play in, teaching fundamentals for someone on the outside,” Hillman stated.

Other sessions of the day were hosted by Dan Kahn of Kahn Media/TREAD Agency and Bryan Burhans, former Pennsylvania Game Commission executive director.

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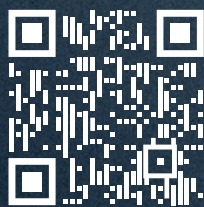


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