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THE INDUSTRY'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE — EST. 1955

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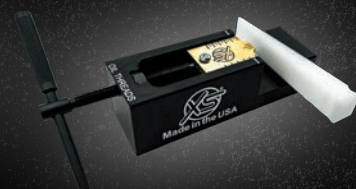
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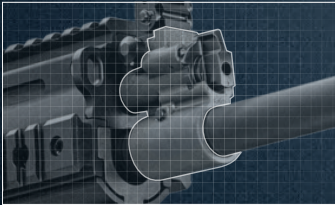
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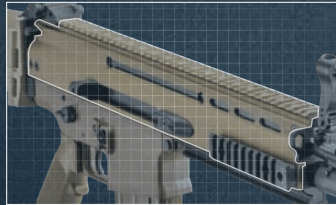
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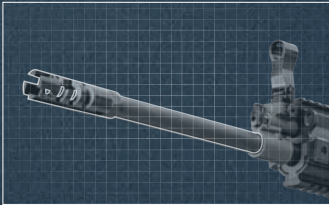
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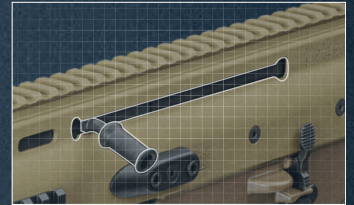
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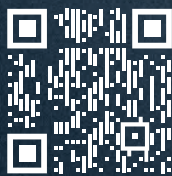
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The Final Print Edition

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Don't Forget About Accessories

There's no way around it: sales aren't what they were from 2020 to 2022. Despite this, there are still "lanes" available to make profits from at the beginning of Q4 2025. One of them is the art of upselling accessories. For every gun purchase, have your team push accessories — eye/ear protection, ammo, magazines, knives, flashlights, you name it — and see what happens.

Inside this month's issue, Annette Evans and Bryan Hendricks each touch on the value of accessories from different perspectives. The title alone in Evans' piece ("Closing Strong: Make Accessories Essential To Every Gun Sale") foreshadows the premise of her article: Make sure accessories are presented front and center.

Evans contends, "Being a one-stop shop is good for everyone. After all, a local place gives consumers an opportunity to go hands-on with things they might want to buy, and sets you up to support impulse purchases. The trick is figuring out how to get people buying more than just the gun."

In "Survival Instinct," Hendricks emphasizes there's a natural tie-in between firearms and survival/prepper supplies (i.e., accessories).

One store that has successfully leaned into this niche is Prepper Gun Shop in Grand Forks, N.D. The store's General Manager, Cameron Davis, shared his perspective.

"It's about making sure our customers are prepared for any situation that can happen. We hope for the best, but we prepare for the worst," he said.

For more insights on expanding sales beyond the firearm, see Evans' story on **p. 36** and Hendricks' piece on **p. 38**.

BUILDING TOMORROW'S SHOOTERS — TODAY

There's just something captivating about a story where the shooting sports have been so impactful on an individual that he or she decides to become a leader and develop the next generation of shooters.

This month, Nancy Keaton has a



OCTOBER 2025

must-read profile on Ruth Abel Boyer (**p. 44**). Boyer's father, Mark Abel of HOP Munitions, introduced her to the sport of shooting, which has led her down the path of learning to shoot, competing and now coaching.

You, the dealer, have an important role to play in developing the next generation of shooters. Boyer has seen firsthand how sponsorships can ignite a competitor's passion for the sport.

"I love to watch the kids grow and develop, she said. "You can really see how the investment affects these kids and how it improves not only their scores but also the friendships and the relationships they build."

THE FINAL CHAPTER

After 70 years and more than 800 issues, this will be the final print edition of *Shooting Industry*. In this month's *Industry Link* column, I write about what the future looks like for this legacy publication — which predates the Gun Control Act, the end of the Cold War and, of course, the internet. *SI* isn't going away, though. We're pivoting to a digital-only format, which will be centered on our weekly Dealer Advantage e-newsletter (sending Mondays). Make sure you sign up: shootingindustry.com/dealer-advantage.

We're very grateful for the journey we've had as a print publication, and are proud to have consistently served the backbone of this industry — the brick-and-mortar dealer. Thank you for being part of it. We hope you enjoy this final edition.

— Jade Moldae, Publisher & Editor **SI**

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



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOCUSING ON WHAT WE CAN CONTROL

At Maxon Shooter's Supplies & Indoor Range, training and range use have continued to grow 10–20% over the past two years, while firearms (that we can sell) are flat to slightly down for the same period. Used firearms continue to be a bright spot for us. While there are national and macroeconomic trends influencing the demand for firearms, training and range use, it is important to keep in mind local/state issues.

For example, Illinois passed the odious "Protecting Illinois Communities Act" — its gun ban — in Jan. 2023. The run-up to its passage, as well as the week enforcement was suspended (we won a preliminary injunction in the Federal District Court), saw a surge in gun sales. So for Illinois dealers, in addition to any overall decline in

gun sales, gun sales in 2024 and 2025 have suffered further declines — from 10–40% vs. pre-ban — as inventory sits on the shelf, salable only in very limited circumstances.

Likewise, training and range use can be driven by local issues. Illinois passed its Shall Issue concealed carry act in 2013. There was a surge of training and renewed interest in firearms after that win. The license is good for five years. Unsurprisingly, we've seen a solid uptick in renewal class enrollment and range use on a five-year cycle now.

So rather than fret about macroeconomic issues outside our sphere of influence, the Maxon team focuses our efforts on those things we can control: providing a five-star experience for our customers, new and old. **SI**

— Dan Eldridge, Owner
Maxon Shooter's Supplies & Indoor Range
Des Plaines, Ill.

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NEW CATEGORIES, TRUSTED SERVICE: ZANDERS STANDS APART

Content Sponsored by Zanders

For more than six decades, Sparta, Ill.-based Zanders Sporting Goods has taken a “customer first” approach to doing business.

One of the ways Zanders has been successful in serving dealers is through its responsiveness to market conditions, enabling dealers to access must-have products quickly. In Dec. 2024, Zanders added a high-demand category — suppressors — to its catalog of more than 40,000 products, a move that has already delivered strong value to customers in 2025.

“Suppressors have been a great addition to our catalog,” stated Danny Siegler, Zanders president and COO. “It took a lot of work and time for us to get into the category, but it came at the right time and is already paying off for our retail partners.”

When the \$200 tax stamp is eliminated in the new year, the suppressor category is poised to ignite. When it does, Siegler says Zanders will be ready to equip dealers.

“We’ve solidified our presence in this category in 2025, and are well-positioned to take on the demand expected in 2026,” he noted.

Zanders offers suppressors from several trusted brands, including Dead Air, Rugged, Otter Creek Labs, HUXWRX, CMMG and Yankee Hill Machine.

Siegler reserved special praise for Luke Poston, Zanders director of procurement, thanks to his behind-

the-scenes efforts that facilitated Zanders’ entrance into this surging category.

“Luke did a lot of the legwork to get us to this point — he spearheaded the SOT process, compliance and developed important partnerships. The things he did at a foundational level allowed us to build up in this segment,” Siegler said.

ANOTHER BRIGHT SPOT: THERMAL/NIGHT VISION

In addition to the suppressor category success, thermal/night vision products have been a standout performer for Zanders this year. PARD, AGM, Konus, InfiRay and Pulsar are just some of the brands available to dealers through Zanders.

“Thermal and night vision products have grown significantly since we began offering this category to our customers seven or eight years ago,” Siegler recalled. “A benefit for dealers who order these expensive units through us is they don’t have to tie up additional capital on a wall of thermals, since most brands are readily available through Zanders.”

According to Siegler, Zanders is steadily growing its lineup of thermal and night vision products, adding new SKUs and brands as dealers request them.

A CULTURE OF SERVICE

Achieving a high level of success across 63 years in a tight-knit industry is no coincidence. As a family-run company, Zanders upholds the values instilled by generations of leadership:

coming together as a team, and doing whatever it takes to get the job done.

Consequently, it’s not uncommon for Siegler to work the shipping line in the warehouse to assist in getting orders out on time. He says he’s merely following the example of what was in place before him.

“It meant a lot to me seeing current and previous generations of Zanders leaders come together — irrespective of their title or job function — and get the job done. It shaped my mindset as a leader, which I try to pass on to our team,” he said.

This approach to fostering a team environment extends to relationships with customers, Siegler added.

“We push our sales department to grow their relationships with dealers so it’s more relational, rather than transactional,” he said. “They put themselves in dealers’ shoes so they can know everything he or she might need to be successful.”

Zanders’ ability to meet the needs of its customers has been accentuated by its significant investment in its comprehensive Warehouse Management System over the years — an effort led by CEO Stefanie Zanders and CIO Herb Seeger.

“Our industry is very old school. We see ourselves as an old-school company with new-school technology — and that’s the way we want to keep it. Stefanie and Herb have kept us on the cutting edge,” Siegler noted.

However, Siegler contends no amount of technology can replace the impact of person-to-person interactions, especially in our industry.

“We’re aware of our surroundings and the industry we’re in: We still want human beings working in customer service and as sales reps. If we get too much into AI and decrease actual personal interactions with dealers, that will be a negative,” he said. “We’re staying grounded where we’re at, giving customers personalized service.”

For more information about Zanders and its many dealer programs, call (800) 851-4373 or visit www.gzanders.com



◀ An array of Smith & Wesson executives and local/state dignitaries mark the opening of the new 236-acre Smith & Wesson Academy in Maryville, Tenn.

“

Our performance during the seasonal slow period for firearms demonstrates the strength of our brand and the ongoing success of our innovation strategy.”

Mark Smith • President & CEO
Smith & Wesson

SMITH & WESSON RELEASES Q1 2026 FINANCIAL RESULTS, OPENS NEW ACADEMY

Sept. 4, Smith & Wesson Brands announced financial results for the first quarter fiscal year 2026, ended July 31, 2025. Net sales were \$85.1 million, a decrease of \$3.3 million, or 3.7%, from the comparable quarter last year. Gross margin was 25.9% compared with 27.4% in the comparable quarter last year.

Mark Smith, S&W president and CEO, highlighted the company's better-than-expected performance during the quarter, while emphasizing the importance of innovation in today's market.

“First quarter results came in better than expected, reflecting robust demand for our new products and continued strong market share for our broader portfolio in every firearms category in

which we compete,” Smith said. “Our performance during the seasonal slow period for firearms demonstrates the strength of our brand and the ongoing success of our innovation strategy. Innovation remains a cornerstone of our strategy, with new products accounting for 37.3% of sales in the first quarter. With a strong pipeline of new products upcoming, we will continue to invest in innovation to keep the line fresh, and ensure we maintain our leadership position.”

Deana McPherson, S&W executive VP and CFO, noted a positive sell through of the company's products at the retail level during Q1 2026. She predicts a “normal seasonal environment” for the company during Q2 2026.

“During the quarter, inventory at distributors declined by over 10% from the end of the prior quarter and by over 13% compared with the end of July 2024 in terms of actual units, indicating positive sell through of our products at retail and a good position for us as we look forward to the coming months,” she said. “We expect a normal seasonal environment, causing our second fiscal quarter sales to grow significantly over the first quarter

Continued on p. 18

RCBS LAUNCHES THE RELOADING HUB

RCBS has announced the launch of the RCBS Reloading Hub — a new, comprehensive online destination at RCBS.com to educate and empower reloaders of all experience levels.

With a growing library of how-to articles, videos and tips, the Reloading Hub covers the entire handloading process — from getting started with the right press and die setup procedure, to

topics such as case prep, trimming and bullet casting. The platform also gives a breakdown of the essential gear needed to begin reloading, making it easy for newcomers to confidently step into the world of handloading.

“Our mission at RCBS has always been to support handloaders with the highest quality equipment and education,” said RCBS Marketing Director Joel Hodgdon. “The reloading hub was created to make handloading more accessible, understandable and enjoyable for everyone, from

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beginners to seasoned pros.”

The Reloading Hub will be continually updated with new content, including detailed walkthroughs, educational videos, FAQs, gear recommendations and more.

[/ rcbs.com/reloading-hub](https://rcbs.com/reloading-hub)



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DRIVE. ORGANIZATIONAL SOLUTIONS LAUNCHES

DRIVE. Organizational Solutions, a leadership and organizational development firm founded by firearms industry veteran, Kristi Elrod, has launched. DRIVE. is dedicated to helping firearms, hunting, and sport shooting companies grow strong leaders, retain talent and improve performance from the inside out.

With more than 25 years of experience in the industry, Elrod has seen the clear business case for cultivating balanced leadership — especially in male-dominated fields. While women make up less than 25% of the workforce in

these industries, studies continue to show that companies with more women in executive roles outperform those without — demonstrating greater profitability, stronger collaboration and increased employee satisfaction and retention.

“So many companies are struggling to keep their best people and grow their next generation of leaders — especially women,” said Elrod. “DRIVE. was created to address that head-on, with solutions that work in the real world, not just on paper.”

DRIVE. Organizational Solutions provides customized leadership development, executive coaching, team performance consulting and employee engagement strategies rooted in evidence-based organizational psychology. With



deep industry knowledge and a people-first approach, DRIVE. aims to set a new standard for how companies attract, retain and develop talent — especially women in underrepresented roles.

Organizations interested in learning more about DRIVE.'s broader industry-wide leadership initiative or custom solutions can contact Elrod directly for customized strategy sessions, speaking opportunities or partnerships.

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

TRADITIONS PERFORMANCE FIREARMS' NITROBOLT NOW IN STORES

Traditions Performance Firearms announced its groundbreaking NitroBolt is now shipping and available in stores — just in time for hunters to gear up with this game-changing technology for the season.

The NitroBolt is the only FireStick-capable bolt-action firearm in the world,

solidifying Traditions' role at the forefront of innovation in the shooting sports industry. By pairing modern engineering with Federal Premium's revolutionary FireStick system, the NitroBolt delivers unprecedented performance, accuracy, and reliability.

“We are thrilled for the NitroBolt to be out in the marketplace so hunters and shooters can experience this incredible product firsthand,” said Alison Hall, Traditions marketing. “As the first and only bolt-action designed to be compatible with the FireStick system — along with an



extensive list of features — the NitroBolt sets a new standard for muzzleloaders. We know people have been eagerly waiting, and they are going to be impressed with the performance.”

[/ traditionsfirearms.com/nitrobolt](https://traditionsfirearms.com/nitrobolt)

KAHN MEDIA RELEASES AI VISIBILITY ENGINE

Kahn Media, a full-service marketing agency specializing in the automotive, outdoor and luxury markets, has announced the launch of its new AI Visibility Engine. The service helps brands adapt to the rapid emergence of AI-driven search results from LLM platforms like ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity and others. It is available now and can be implemented for any new or existing clients.

“I'm very excited to see our new and innovative AI Visibility Engine hit the market. This new service will give brands a tailored path to understand where they're missing out and where they can improve their messaging with AI search,”

said Dan Kahn, founder and CEO of Kahn Media. “We're glad to be able to couple the expertise of our team alongside the analytical powers of our AI tools and techniques to give clients a more rounded vision of where they can grow.”

The in-depth audit portion of the AI Visibility Engine utilizes Kahn Media's in-house-developed tools and techniques to give brands a deep understanding of how or if they are appearing in search results across multiple LLM platforms. In contrast to services that simply perform an audit, the AI Visibility Engine also provides a curated AI strategy roadmap individually tailored to each brand to help them increase AI visibility and stay relevant in a constantly changing market. The methodology builds on Kahn Media's focus on brand storytelling, utilizing the



AI expertise of Kahn Media to give brands a cohesive view of the market, their place within it and how they can leverage their results in AI search.

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

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Store firearms securely, inaccessible to children and unauthorized users.

Consult and comply with any and all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, requirements, and/or restrictions, including but not limited to those regarding the purchase, ownership, use, transport, and carrying of a firearm. Not all products are available in all states or jurisdictions.

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After the resounding success of the 590 Shockwave, our next challenge was to create it in semi-auto. Mission accomplished. Lightweight, easy to handle, and at just over 27 inches in length, the 990 AfterShock features a durable gas-operating system and corrosion-resistant internal parts and finishing that provide smooth, efficient, reliable cycling. Outside, a rubberized palm pad grip, a beveled loading port, oversized ergonomic controls and accessory-ready MLOK® mounting ports, all providing shooting comfort, efficiency and adaptability. Available models offer 14.75" or 18.5" barrel, and optional Crimson Trace® Lasersaddle® for enhanced sighting performance.

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WEATHERBY MARKS 80TH ANNIVERSARY WITH TWO SPECIAL RELEASES

Sept. 1, Weatherby Inc. marked its 80th anniversary. Founded in 1945 by historic wildcatter Roy Weatherby, the company has remained family-owned and is now led by third-generation owner Adam Weatherby.

To honor eight decades of innovation and tradition, Weatherby introduced two special releases: the Mark V 80th Anniversary Commemorative Rifle — chambered in one of Roy's original magnum cartridges, the .300 WBY Mag. — and a limited return of retro ammunition boxes. Together, these offerings blend the past, present and future of Weatherby.

The 80th Anniversary Commemorative Rifle pays tribute to Roy Weatherby's legacy with a classic look that reflects



Mark V 80th Anniversary Commemorative Rifle

the company's storied history while incorporating modern features and materials, creating a beautiful blend of past and present. This unique rifle embodies the craftsmanship and forward-thinking designs that have defined Weatherby for 80 years.

Notable attributes of this heirloom-quality rifle include an engraved Mark V titanium action, engraved straight-fluted bolt with checkered bolt knob, engraved BSF carbon fiber barrel, engraved Accubrake DST, exhibition-grade Monte Carlo walnut stock with rosewood caps and maple spacers, a custom protective hard case and more.

In addition, Weatherby is bringing back three of its most beloved ammunition box designs in a limited run: Tiger Box (.300 WBY Mag.), Whitetail Box (.257 WBY Mag.) and Fox Box (.224 WBY).

"These releases are about more than just products; they're about celebrating the legacy my grandfather began 80 years ago. The 80th Anniversary Commemorative Rifle and the return of our retro ammo boxes honor where we've been, while pointing to where we're going. These products truly blend past, present and future," said President Adam Weatherby.

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

EVOLVE RANGE SOLUTIONS DEBUTS SUBSCRIPTION-BASED PLAN

Evolve Range Solutions has launched a subscription-based model for the EV-R Target System — designed to make advanced digital targets affordable and accessible to ranges of all sizes. With flexible monthly terms, a simple deposit and full hardware/software coverage, this plan allows ranges to generate revenue without the heavy burden of a large upfront investment.

Beyond affordability, the system delivers clear ROI opportunities. Ranges can generate new revenue through a built-in advertising platform, which displays ads downrange when the system isn't in use.

The platform combines live-fire integration with a mobile app for shooters, real-time leaderboards, training data and entertainment-focused games. The EV-R System delivers stronger customer engagement and measurable returns for range owners.

"We're proud to launch this subscription plan because it makes



Evolve Range Solutions' EV-R Target System delivers both an enhanced customer experience and real business ROI.

bringing cutting-edge technology, training tools and entertainment to ranges both affordable and convenient," said Alex Hague, Evolve Range co-owner. "We understand the costs involved in opening or updating a facility, and our subscription model gives range owners the opportunity to earn revenue as they operate, lessening the financial burden. With live-fire capability, leaderboards, training data and even in-lane advertising, the system offers both an enhanced customer experience and real business ROI."

With a \$2,000 per lane subscription

deposit (or \$1,500/lane for more than three lanes), monthly plans start at \$900/month (24 months). A 36-month plan is \$750/month (roughly \$25/day, often less than one lane visit). This structure gives ranges the ability to generate recurring revenue without the burden of a large upfront purchase.

"Whether you're building a new facility, revitalizing unused lanes or looking to add systems that deliver more value, this model can be a real difference-maker for your range," Hague concluded.

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



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WILEY X, AMERICAN SNIPER JOIN FORCES ON WX JAKL FRAME

Wiley X has collaborated with the American Sniper Brand to produce the special edition WX JAKL frame. Building on the success of the original WX JAKL launched in March, this release underscores Wiley X's commitment to protecting those who serve on and off the battlefield.

"This collaboration is more than a product launch. It's a tribute to shared values of honor, grit and protection," said Dan Freeman, CEO and co-founder

of Wiley X. "We designed the WX JAKL American Sniper to deliver elite performance while honoring the legacy of those who put it all on the line."

The partnership was forged with Colton Kyle, son of the late Chris Kyle, the legendary U.S. Navy SEAL whose story inspired the American Sniper brand. Now leading the brand, Colton carries his father's mission forward.

"My dad wore Wiley X," said Kyle. "This frame represents the warrior spirit and values he lived by, including faith, discipline and fierce love for others. It feels like a full-circle moment."

Engineered for high-stakes environments, the WX JAKL x American Sniper combines Wiley X's signature



WX JAKL - American Sniper Brand Signature Series

protection with purposeful design. It's designed to meet or exceed U.S. military standards for ballistic protection, including V0 Ballistics standards. Additional features include CAPTIVATE lens technology, an aggressive eight-base wrap design and a triloid nylon frame.

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

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

NSSF AWARDS \$50,000 IN PATRON MEMBER STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

NSSF awarded \$50,000 in scholarships to 20 students through its essay contest for employees and families of Patron Member companies.

"On behalf of the NSSF, I would like to congratulate the scholarship award winners and extend our appreciation to all who entered the essay contest," said Tammy McIntyre, NSSF's manager, member services, who oversees the NSSF

Patron Member Scholarship Program. "This year's essays allowed students to explore deep-rooted topics that affect firearm ownership in America today and tap into the history of our constitutional rights. It was great to see so many applicants submit passionate essays and to have these students honored through the NSSF Patron Member Scholarship Program."

The \$8,000 Grand Prize scholarship winner was Anthony D., Olin Winchester.

Taking the First Prize scholarship of \$5,000 was Michael H., The Kinetic Group.

Earning the Second Prize scholarship of \$3,000 was Piper G., The Kinetic Group.

NSSF
The Firearm Industry
Trade Association

NSSF makes the scholarships available as a means of thanking its Patron Members for their substantial financial support of NSSF and its mission to promote, protect and preserve hunting and the shooting sports. This scholarship program allows NSSF to recognize its Patron Member companies for their extraordinary commitment to their trade association.

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

SIG SAUER GOLF EVENT SUPPORTS HAVA

SIG SAUER hosted its ninth Annual Honored American Veterans Afield (HAVA) Charity Golf event, raising over \$160,000 to support disabled veterans. The event was held at Pease Golf Course in Portsmouth, N.H., and hosted 192 golfers and 27 sponsors.

Governor Kelly Ayotte made a proclamation recognizing SIG SAUER for outstanding support of disabled veterans as follows:

"Now, Therefore, I, Kelly Ayotte, Governor of the state of New Hampshire, do hereby proclaim August 1, 2025 as the 9th Annual SIG SAUER Charity

Golf Tournament in the State of New Hampshire, and I commend SIG SAUER, its employees, and all supporters of HAVA for their commitment to our veterans and to the values that define the Granite State."

"HAVA would like to thank SIG SAUER, all event attendees, sponsors, and Governor Ayotte for this incredible contribution, said Tom Taylor, HAVA chairman and executive director. During its nine-year history, this event has raised more than \$800,000 in support of the HAVA mission to get disabled veterans out shooting and hunting, and reintegrating after the sacrifices they've made for our country."

HAVA is a 501(c)(3) organization formed by companies in the shooting and outdoor industry with the purpose of

HAVA

Honored American Veterans Afield

raising awareness and further assisting disabled veterans with their healing process through guided hunts, shooting events and other outdoor sports activities. Sustaining sponsor companies are Smith & Wesson, NSSF, SIG SAUER, Academi, Arnold Defense, Crimson Trace, FMG Publications, GLOCK, Hornady, Leapers/UTG, Leupold & Stevens, Mossberg, RSR Group, Ruger, SureFire, Taurus, Federal, XS Sights and Yamaha Outdoors among numerous contributing companies.

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

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



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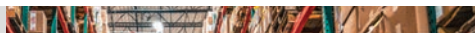
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Continued from p. 10

and to land roughly at 3–5% below the second quarter of fiscal 2025.”

Sept. 12, Smith & Wesson announced the grand opening of the new Smith & Wesson Academy. This state-of-the-art facility, occupying 236 acres in Maryville, Tenn., continues the legacies of both the former Smith & Wesson Academy and the Shooting Sports Center in Springfield, Mass., which were collectively operational between 1969–2017.

The new Smith & Wesson Academy features pistol and carbine ranges, a multi-purpose flex range, a 300-yard rifle range and a two-story immersive shoot house. The Academy’s design also incorporates classrooms, a fitness center, and offices that will house a team of world-class experts leading the training programs.

Renowned instructor Mark “Coch” Cochiolo will lead the Academy. Cochiolo is a retired U.S. Navy Chief Warrant Officer with over three decades of service in Naval Special Warfare. Throughout his distinguished military career, Cochiolo operated in a range of elite roles, including special warfare operator, breacher,



Mark “Coch” Cochiolo brings a wealth of experience in his role as the lead instructor of the Smith & Wesson Academy. A retired SEAL Chief Warrant Officer, who co-created the Navy SEALs’ rigorous firearm training, Cochiolo will develop curriculum to benefit both professional users and civilians of all skill levels.

weapons instructor, training officer and operational tester.

Following his retirement from active duty, Cochiolo transitioned to instruction, applying his operational expertise to train the next generations of Navy SEALs. As a contract instructor for Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training, he developed curriculum and trained more than 4,000 SEAL candidates in marksmanship and tactical weapons handling.

“My decision to partner with Smith & Wesson stems not only from their strong alignment with my values but also

from my personal experience carrying a Smith & Wesson for the past 30 years,” Cochiolo said. “Throughout my career, I have worked with a variety of firearm platforms, and I am grateful for the opportunity to leverage that experience in developing effective curriculum at the Academy, helping as many individuals become proficient with their firearms as possible. Smith & Wesson produces dependable, quality firearms — at the Academy, we’ll teach you how to use them.”

[/ smith-wesson.com](https://smith-wesson.com)

USA CLAY TARGET LEAGUE BREAKS FALL PARTICIPATION RECORD

The fall season is underway for 16,841 student athletes participating in USA Clay Target League (USACTL) programs. Those athletes are competing on 1,109 high school, college and homeschool teams nationwide — supported by over 11,200 coaches, team staff and other volunteers. This is the 31st consecutive season of record-breaking participation since the League was founded in 2008.

“The League provides schools with the opportunity to give their students a place to develop their confidence,

sportsmanship, and teamwork without the high costs and limited playing opportunities of traditional sports,” said John Nelson, president of the USACTL. “Clay target shooting sports are accessible to everyone, and the opportunity to participate on their school’s team influences athlete’s lives for the better.”

This year, USACTL reports more than 13,000 new athletes have joined the League. For high school athletes, their six-week fall season concludes at the end of October. For college athletes, the League’s fall season culminates in the USA College Clay Target League National Championship this Halloween.

“More and more colleges and universities are capitalizing on the growth of the League to find and recruit students



looking to further their education,” Nelson continued. “By providing clay target sports they’re providing an appealing, well-rounded education experience to their prospective students.”

With over 55,000 participating athletes in 2025, the nonprofit USA Clay Target League is America’s largest clay target shooting organization. The League offers trap, skeet, sporting clays and 5-Stand leagues to secondary and postsecondary schools across the country.

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

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

FN AWARDED DLA CONTRACT FOR M240, M249 BARRELS

FN America was awarded an additional \$6.9M in orders for M240 and M249 machine gun barrels spread across nine deliveries by the U.S. Department of Defense's (DoD) Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Land and Maritime.

"The contract to provide these barrels for M240 and M249 machine guns is a testament to our partnership with the U.S. DoD, which dates back nearly five decades," said Mark Cherpes, FN America president and CEO. "We are honored to support the U.S. military with the highest-quality cold hammer-forged barrels. The durability and accuracy of FN barrels provide our servicemen and women with the most effective and highest-performing products available."

FN collaborates with and is a key partner of DLA Land and Maritime, a combat support agency within the U.S.



DoD and one of the largest suppliers of spare parts that support land-based and maritime weapon systems.

DLA Land and Maritime serves over 20,000 customers throughout all U.S. military branches, civil agencies and other DoD organizations, helping to sustain weapon systems in the field.

The M240 general-purpose machine gun, derived from the FN MAG 58, was adopted by the U.S. military in the late 1970s, and has been in continual service since being introduced.

FN has created multiple variants of the M240, including the M240 coaxial, the M240B, M240L, M240D and M240H models. The FN M249 has been a mainstay throughout the U.S. military since 1986 and is currently in service in more than 30 countries.

Throughout its history, FN has been one of the largest suppliers of small arms to the U.S. military and continues to develop innovative technology for the future. [SI](#)

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

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M. STOCK

Hodgdon Powder Company Appoints President & CEO

Mike Stock was recently appointed the president and CEO of Hodgdon

Powder Company succeeding Steve Kehrwald, who will serve as an adviser through December 2025 before transitioning upon his retirement to chairman of the board of the company.

Hodgdon shareholders Chris Hodgdon and Amy Hodgdon-Myer, shared, "Mike's vision, proven leadership and customer-first mindset make him the ideal choice to guide Hodgdon into its next chapter."

Stock has more than two decades of leadership experience from Winchester Ammunition, where he served roles spanning engineering, product management, marketing, sales and operations.



S. MEISEL

Christensen Arms Promotes VP

Shane Meisel is now serving as the VP of sales and marketing for Christensen Arms.

He is overseeing the strategic alignment of both the sales and marketing divisions, bringing a unified vision to customer engagement, product launches and dealer relationships.

"His deep understanding of our customers and his proven ability to build impactful campaigns make him the ideal leader to integrate and accelerate our sales and marketing strategy," said Matt Fleming, president of Christensen Arms.



J. REHM

Dead Air Silencers Taps Marketing Director

Dead Air Silencers welcomed Jared Rehm

as the director of marketing. Rehm will spearhead Dead Air's strategic brand marketing and communications initiatives, ensuring the brand's continued leadership in both existing and emerging markets.

Ernie Beckwith, CEO of Dead Air Silencers, stated, "We are excited to welcome Jared to our leadership team. His extensive experience and strategic vision will be invaluable as we continue to innovate and expand our product offerings."

Rehm has over 22 years of experience in marketing and a robust background in the outdoor industry from leadership roles at Sellmark Corporation and Benelli USA.



L. THOMAS

XS Sights Hires Commercial Sales Manager

Leaha Thomas has joined XS Sights as the commercial sales manager.

She will oversee the company's commercial sales strategy, grow aftermarket sales and manage the XS Sights customer solutions team.

Zack Kinsley, XS Sights' VP of business development, stated, "[Thomas] is not only a great strategic thinker, she executes well and will be a strong addition to our team as we continue to grow."

Prior to joining XS, Thomas was the managing partner at Bolt Strategies. A U.S. Army veteran, her experience stems from a variety of sales and marketing positions within the hunting and shooting industry.



B. HULZEBOSCH

PROOF Research Names Director

PROOF Research appointed Brandon Hulzebosch as the commercial director of

sales. He will oversee sales, marketing and customer service

operations, with a focus on accelerating market growth and strengthening relationships with dealers, partners and customers throughout the industry.

Hulzebosch has more than 20 years of proven experience in sales leadership within the firearms industry.



S. DENNING

Zanders Sporting Goods Announces Buyer Retirement

Zanders' longtime buyer, Steve Denning,

has announced his retirement after 28 years with the company.

"After decades of unwavering dedication, sharp industry insight and steadfast commitment, Steve Denning leaves behind not just a legacy of excellence as a buyer, but also a lasting impact on all of us who had the privilege to work with him," said Danny Siegler, president and COO of Zanders Sporting Goods.



Chattanooga Shooting Supplies Inc. Announces Promotions

Chattanooga Shooting Supplies Inc. (CSSI) announced a series of leadership promotions: Tommy Hamm is now VP and GM of Natchez Shooting & Outdoors; Adam Crews was promoted to VP and GM of Chattanooga Shooting Supplies Inc.; Melissa Dubiel was promoted to VP of purchasing; and Derek Fortna is now VP of marketing and e-commerce.

"These team members have played a pivotal role in shaping our organization's momentum," said Bill Sumner, president of Chattanooga Shooting Supplies Inc. "Their leadership, expertise

and integrity have earned the trust of their teams, our customers and our partners.”



S. NADOLNY

**Primary Arms
Hires Legal &
Compliance VP**

Primary
Arms hired
Samantha-
Anne Horwitch

Nadolny as the VP of legal and compliance. In this role, she will oversee all legal and compliance functions across the company.

Nadolny has served in leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. She was associate general

counsel at Select Water Solutions and general counsel and chief compliance officer at Citelum US.



J. PITASSI

**Rost Martin
Names National
Sales Director**

Rost Martin
has welcomed
Jay Pitassi as
the national

director of sales.

“Jay Pitassi’s arrival marks a significant milestone in our journey to grow the Rost Martin brand, and I firmly believe he’s the ideal person to help us achieve even greater success,” said Rost Martin CEO

Chris Toomer.

With over 30 years in the firearms industry, Pitassi’s experience stems from roles at Blaser and Beretta. Most recently, he served as the director of sales at FN America.



K. STUART

**CRKT Advances
Marketing VP**

CRKT announced the recent promotion of Kyle Stuart to VP of marketing. Stuart will lead the CRKT marketing team while evolving the company’s marketing

strategy, strengthening cross-functional collaboration and leading initiatives to drive brand awareness, customer acquisition and sales growth.

“Since joining CRKT four years ago, Kyle has demonstrated strong leadership and strategic thinking, while developing a deep understanding of our brand and consumers,” said Mark Schreiber, CRKT president.

Stuart is a seasoned marketing professional with deep and varied experience honed through positions in agency settings as well as on in-house teams. **SI**



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The Davidson's Exclusive Ruger American Ranch Camo in 300 Blackout is an all-around defender.

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BY MASSAD AYOOB

PICKING WINNERS

New firearms and accessories are constantly being introduced. How does a dealer pick potential best sellers before investing their hard-earned money in inventory?

There are several indicators to look for. Why try to predict at all? The easiest course of action is to take a wait-and-see approach. Are customers coming in asking for the new item? Have you come to realize the new item is gathering cobwebs on other dealers' shelves, or flying out the door so fast they can't keep them in stock?

Those dealers have done the local research for you ... but at a cost. Their sales could have been your sales!

So, how do we look into the future? None of us have a crystal ball. We do, however, have our own experience, and have learned to correlate certain things with successful new product introductions and can make reasonably good predictions of how the new introduction will be taken by his customer base.

ONE EXAMPLE

By all accounts, the Ruger RXM 9mm pistol is selling well. It was easy to predict. Here is some of the handwriting that was on the wall as soon as it came out:

Proven brand. Sturm, Ruger & Co. Inc. has been a trusted name in the gun world since 1949. They build guns that work. The pistol was produced in cooperation with Magpul, a hugely

successful and popular manufacturer. Two proven brands together.

Proven format. Externally, the RXM can be considered a clone of the wildly popular GLOCK 19.

Exciting new features. Inside, the RXM has a modular FCU (fire control unit) that has captured the imagination of the handgunning public since the introduction of the SIG P320.

Low price, high value. Since that first "Luger-lookin'" Ruger .22 pistol in 1949, Ruger has had a reputation for high value for the dollar. The brand is always on the best-buy list. There are other GLOCK clones that undersell the original GLOCK, but none with the brand recognition of Ruger.

Publicity. The RXM was on numerous magazine covers. It was a hot topic on the online gun forums. The firearms media sold the hell out of it. Virtually all the commentary by actual users was positive, which leads us to ...

The product works. When I tested the RXM for *GUNS Magazine*, I liked it well enough to purchase the test sample. Excellent sights. Good trigger. Felt great in the hand. Accepted GLOCK 9mm magazines already in the hands of so many gun owners. What was not to like?

NEW & DIFFERENT

How do we spot a best-selling trendsetter? It's gonna be about the features, the image — the *niche* of something new.

Smith & Wesson introduced

◀ A "winner" right out the gate when it debuted at the end of 2024, the Ruger RXM line has already expanded to include a threaded barrel SKU. (Image: Ruger)

its SHIELD line of polymer-frame subcompact pistols in 2012. At its introduction, I told their head of pistol manufacturing, "My God, the trigger is better than your full-size M&P (at that time, the Gen 1)." He smiled back, "Yeah, I know." I said, "You're gonna sell a million of 'em."

In fact, S&W SHIELD sales hit a million units in record time. Why?

Something different – and desirable. Small, light, thin yet in 9mm and the then-popular .40 S&W, later in .45 ACP, and remarkably light in recoil for all three calibers.

As mentioned earlier, a recognizable brand name associated with high quality. And, they worked.

A TRUE "GAME CHANGER"

Another game-changer design followed from another company half a decade later. SIG SAUER introduced the P365 in 2018. It was an instant hit and quickly reached seven-figure sales count. Why?



How do we spot a best-selling trendsetter? It's gonna be about the features, the image — the niche of something new.

A recognizable brand name associated with high quality. Hmm ... might there be a pattern emerging?

Something different and desirable. SIG's Phil Strader is credited with a "stack and a half" magazine design that created a pocket-size 9mm pistol with a 10-round magazine, and only slightly larger with longer, higher-capacity magazines. This feature has been widely copied since. It took advantage of two trends at once. On one side, a disturbing number of states had passed 10-round magazine limits, and it was just plain irritating to free gun owners to have to put only 10 rounds in a

pistol designed for 15 or 18.

If they were going to be stuck with that, they'd at least get the easier carry and concealment of the relatively small P365. And for "free states" without magazine capacity limits, the P365 was still holding more rounds than anything else its size at the time. By 2018, police departments were already switching from larger calibers to 9mm, in part for their higher capacity and easier "shootability." The P365 was somewhat on board with that trend, too.

Good value. The P365 was reasonably priced. It had an excellent trigger pull. The big, high-visibility "X-ray" sights were simply outstanding. The little P365 was easy to shoot well. I taught a class with my test sample and in the qualification demonstration, it shot a perfect score with a group I'd have expected from a full-size service pistol. Serious shooters flocked to the gun. You know the rest: The P365 is still a top seller

years later, and has spawned the Slimline GLOCKS, Springfield Hellcats and S&W's SHIELD Plus to compete with it.

None of us has a crystal ball. I

certainly don't. But we can identify the above elements that signal a best-selling defensive firearm on the horizon and allow a dealer to cash in on its popularity early. **SI**



The pistol that redefined micro-compacts: the SIG SAUER P365. With full-size capacity and expansive popularity, its success reshaped the concealed carry market. (Image: SIG SAUER)

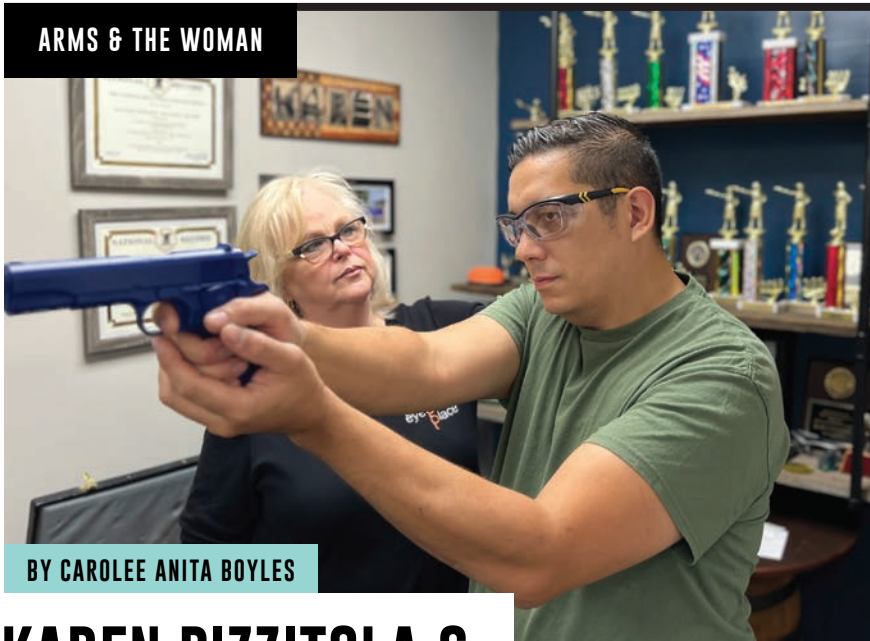
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BY CAROLEE ANITA BOYLES

KAREN PIZZITOLA & THE EYEGLOSS PLACE

WE come to our professions in a variety of ways: education, family connections or just sheer luck. Few of us can say we found our calling because someone else was out for a night of partying.

Karen Pizzitola's story begins just that way. Today, Pizzitola owns The Eyeglass Place in Ellington, Conn. Her introduction to the optical business came about because a friend of hers was dating the manager of an optical business in New York.

"One night, he had a little too much to drink and offered all of her friends jobs," Pizzitola recalled. "When he sobered up the next day, I told him I was the one he offered the job to. Back then, there was no school for becoming an optician, so it was an apprenticeship program where I had to work under other people, borrow books from people and hope I was studying the right thing. Then there was a national test I had to take."

Pizzitola decided to take that route for an education, in part so her parents didn't have to pay for college, and she would still earn a degree.

"I really liked it," she said. "I'm rather analytical in my thought process, and it's a very analytical job."

As Pizzitola's daughter, Laura, grew up, she also became interested in the

business.

"She would come to work with me sometimes and see what I had when I brought things home," Pizzitola shared. "She helped me work on training manuals because I was always in management. She came up through the ranks."

A little over 20 years ago, Laura joined her mother in the optical business, forming the only mother-daughter optical business in Connecticut.

AN EYE FOR OPPORTUNITY

About 25 years ago, Pizzitola became interested in shooting. The husband of a friend of hers is a lifelong shooter, and he was starting a summertime shooting class for some of the employees at Pratt & Whitney, a jet engine manufacturer based in Hartford, Conn.

"I thought it sounded interesting, so I joined the class," she said. "I was good at it, and I liked it. I stuck with it and got up to Master level in Bullseye Shooting. Since then, I've won four national titles, and I've represented the United States at Camp Perry, where there were over 800 shooters. I was in the top 20."

Once other shooters learned Pizzitola was an optician, they started asking her for help.

"People would come up and say, 'I'm having trouble with my iron sights,'" she

◀ Karen Pizzitola has a dedicated room at her facility that enables customers to test new eyewear in real time. (Using a blue gun, of course!)

said. "Or they'd say, 'I'm getting a flare in the red dot. Can you do anything about it?'"

Pizzitola experimented with different lenses to try to help her fellow shooters and learned as she went along.

"I did a little homework and tried various things to come up with something that would actually work and be an adjustment to help them see the front sight and the target," she stated. "Not at the same time, obviously; our eyes don't do that. But so they could go between the two and hold their head in a comfortable position. Sometimes something would work for one person but not for another. So, I would try something else. I had to figure out ways to get around people's issues so they could enjoy their sport again."

FINDING THE BEST MATCH

Over time, Pizzitola developed what she terms her "bag of tricks" for helping shooters who wear glasses. Her reputation spread by word of mouth; more and more shooters found their way to her door, asking for help.

"Things just kind of morphed from there into me helping people who are doing speed shooting and IDPA and Cowboy Shooting and mostly clays now," Pizzitola said. "People in the sport want help and they want to be able to do their sport again. And each person is a little different; what works for one person may not work for another. I'm able to dig deep and find out exactly what it is they're challenged with, and then, knowing the products as I do, find the best product to match it."

In 2019, Pizzitola purchased The Eyeglass Place of Newington, Conn., where she had worked when she was a teenager.

"The owner wanted to retire, so I bought it six months before COVID hit," she said. "I ran it for six years."

While she was running The Eyeglass Place of Newington, Pizzitola was thinking about her dream of owning an optical shop where she lived in Ellington.

"Laura and I decided to take a leap of faith," she said. In 2022, they opened The Eyeglass Place of Ellington. She ran both stores until she sold the Newington portion of the business three years ago.

EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING

Today, customers come from all over the Northeast for Pizzitola to help them with their glasses issues.

"I have someone who comes from New Hampshire, and someone else coming from New York in a couple of days," she noted. "I also have people who come from Rhode Island. Information spreads by word of mouth. Everyone tells me nobody else does this."

In her store, Pizzitola has a private room with a target set up where customers can bring their own firearms or use a Bluegun while she evaluates what each shooter needs. For those who aren't near her, sometimes Pizzitola is able to help customers long distance; several retailers across the country refer customers to her.

“

The guys are a little more competitive than the ladies are, and when they get into a sport, they want all the things. Ladies tend to just get something that functions.”

Karen Pizzitola • Owner
The Eyeglass Place

"What I can do depends on what they want done," she said. "If it's iron sights, I would prefer to see them because it's different for everybody. If it's clays, I really just need to get them the right size frames and I need their pupil measurements, so sometimes I can do those long-distance."

Pizzitola's reputation continues to spread through word of mouth.

"A lot of the guys I've helped with go back to their ranges and put a poster up and put cards with it," she said. (Pizzitola shared this represents her best advertising.)

Keeping prices within the means of the average shooting enthusiast is something Pizzitola is proud to offer.

"My lowest package price is \$297 for a frame and carbonate lenses," she shared.

The price can go up from there, but most of the glasses she makes are \$500 or less.

SALES ON THE ROAD

Besides working with shooters in her store, Pizzitola often travels to them, too. She visits stores and ranges within about two hours of Ellington.

"A lot of my customers are in the Greenwich area," she said. "It's a good two hours away. I went to a range there and saw them for the day. We brought our trial lenses and shooters were able to bring their prescriptions. We were able to do everything we do here. I do a lot of women's events, too."

She also receives invitations to events all around the area.

"There might be a big match or big competition, and I'm invited to come talk about what I do and the products I use," she shared. This gives shooters a chance to see what she has used to help others, and to experiment a little with things such as different colored lenses for clays.

Pizzitola said men and women have some interesting differences in what they look for in specialized shooting glasses.

"I think the guys are a little more competitive than the ladies are, and when they get into a sport, they want all the things," she noted. "Ladies tend to just get something that functions. They're the opposite with regular glasses. With regular glasses, women want all the things and all the pretties and all the look, whereas men are more 'function' buyers. It's weird how they're opposite."

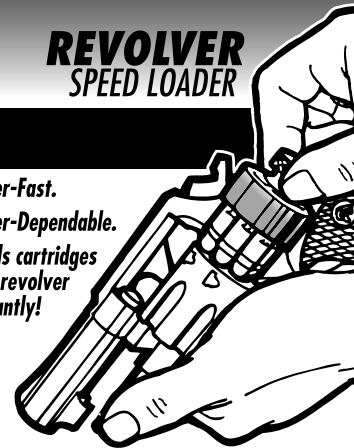
Pizzitola has turned what began as a job offer from an inebriated store manager into a lifetime calling that has helped hundreds of shooters.

"Helping shooters enjoy their sport again is wonderful," she concluded. "It gets me excited about this job all over again." ■

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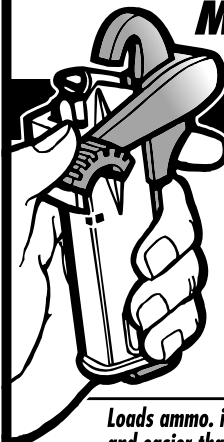
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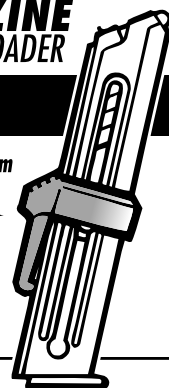
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BY MICHELLE SCHEUERMANN

SHOW UP (AND STAND OUT) ON LINKEDIN

In a world where small marketing teams struggle to stand out organically, LinkedIn Company Pages are often underutilized.

According to HootSuite, there are 67 million company pages on LinkedIn. And, just like any other social media platform, businesses that post weekly see a significant boost in their follower growth. LinkedIn reports these businesses experience 5.6 times more growth than pages that don't post as often.

However, some businesses must decide whether to focus on creating content for their company page or building a personal brand. In other words, is the focus on the company CEO, or is the focus on the company posting more?

Short answer: both.

WEIGHING CONTRASTING APPROACHES

The reality is they are different tasks and asks. You can grow your followers, engagement and impressions on your company page just as easily as “you, the CEO.”

One reason many companies switch from posting as a company to posting as “you, the CEO” is the lack of internal restrictions. *“It’s my page; I can post what I want, when I want, how I want,”* is

usually the thought process.

On the other hand, the company page’s posts must go through a round of internal reviews — which may or may not be helpful.

The “not helpful” part is when it throws the enthusiasm and excitement for creating content out the window. Company pages often get stuck between what they know works and what they are allowed to do.

Here are some examples:

- Company Page: You know how you use stock images on every post? They don’t work.

- Internal Review: Yeah, but that’s our brand.

- Company Page: You know how you are overly branding all posts. And it looks like a template? Don’t do that.

- Internal Review: But that’s how we’ve always done it.

These examples are how (and why) your company page looks like everyone else’s.

Potential employees are professionally stalking your page when they are looking for job ads. Are you the type of company they want to work with for the next 5–10 years? If they see no posts — or boring, templated posts, what message is it sending?

The reality of having an employee (or the CEO) perform “employee

◀ Consider utilizing LinkedIn’s community-building capabilities as another tool in your branding tool belt to stand out from the competition. (Image: natanaelginting / Adobe Stock)

advocacy” posts and have a personal branding page is they can leave the job and take all 6,000 of their followers with them. What does this leave your company page? Nothing.

The challenge is to break free from this mindset and consider breaking free from the “norms” to bring more creativity to the company page.

If you would not stop for your content, why would anyone else?

The antidote is creativity; it involves trying something new and being different, which in the firearm industry can be a difficult hurdle at times.

To accomplish this, let’s review the PAGE framework, which Aussie LinkedIn expert Michelle J. Raymond created. Luckily, this doesn’t require a large budget or ample time, and it works for both B2B and B2C.

PAGE stands for: “P” — Play. “A” — Amplify. “G” — Give. “E” — Establish.

“P” — PLAY.

An average Company Page post today might receive 1,000 impressions — or sets of eyes (give or take on the number of followers), which isn’t much. Therefore, let’s consider a company with five employees, who, together, might have 8,000 impressions on their posts. Better reach and better impressions combined, right? Therefore, your job as company admin is to comment on these employees’ posts. You must leverage their audience! And when you support them, they help you back.

When a CEO shares a company post, comment on it. When an employee posts a win, repost it to your feed and comment on the original post (make sure to switch from your personal LinkedIn to your company LinkedIn before commenting or reposting).

To help further, ensure the company page follows all employees and other businesses by adding them to the company feed. Another option is to tap the “bell” icon in the right corner of the employee’s profile, which sends a notification when they post.

Now, this doesn’t mean to “spam” posts or followers with silly, willy

comments. It involves finding posts within the industry and commenting intelligently as the company page. This task doesn't have to be done daily, but should be done at least once a week.

"A" — AMPLIFY.

Besides employees, there are company partners. These could be distributors or suppliers. Who else can you support? Who else can you amplify their voice in a thoughtful, meaningful way?

Also, think of comments as a signpost that creates an impression. Every time the task is completed, it provides an opportunity for people to return to the company page.

Plus, commenting is faster than building and approving a feed post for the social media team.

"G" — GIVE.

An old saying is, "Give to get." Where can you give on LinkedIn as the Company Page? Examples to consider include a shout-out about a partner or distributor who did something great for you or a repost from an employee who shared a success, which may or may not get a lot of impressions (doesn't matter). That company or person knows you went out of your way to do it. The key is giving genuinely helpful value without expecting immediate returns. Remember the "social" in social media? You will be surprised by what comes back.

"E" — ESTABLISH.

Building a community with a company page doesn't happen with CTAs (Calls to Action). Sometimes the "marketing bros" on LinkedIn will instruct the focus always be on lead generation versus building a community. If followers see the CTA too frequently, they know the drill: they know they get into a marketing funnel and are on an email list if they download your white paper or sign up for a free class.

The job of the Company Page is not to talk about the company *too* much. Think of it like being stuck at a party and all that is heard around the room is "I do this, and I do that... I,



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me, my..." Boring. Self-centered.

Followers want something of substance, guidance and examples. Share a white paper without asking for emails; give a tutorial without requesting followers to "like and share" the post. Put in the effort, and people will show up.



Remember, LinkedIn is more than a platform, it's a community. The question is: how will your company show up and stand out?

There are emotional people on the other side of that post who are looking for help in making decisions day in, day out. How can you be of service?

WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

In 2025, LinkedIn has seen a substantial growth in users uploading videos. The company started testing vertical video formats in 2024 and has

hosted workshops about video on the platform. Anytime a platform is pushing something — or the CEO of the platform is making something — pay attention. What we've seen is the door is open for video creation. If video is being used on other platforms, could it be restructured for LinkedIn? Ask: Is this content relevant to the person I am targeting here?

In the end, the benefits to the company page are:

- Brand visibility multiplies
- Improved brand engagement
- More qualified leads and growth
- Improved brand authority

Lastly, consider a Company Page challenge: Engage with five posts per day as the company for five days. Remember to switch from your personal profile to the company profile before doing so. Check your analytics before starting the challenge and then recheck them afterward — what changed?

By embracing creativity, leveraging the PAGE framework and staying attuned to LinkedIn's evolving trends, your company page can transform into a hub of engagement and authority. Start small — take the five-day challenge, track your progress and watch your brand visibility soar.

Remember, LinkedIn is more than a platform; it's a community. The question is: how will your company show up and stand out? **SI**



From Compacts To Classics

By Peter Suci

Handgun Trends For The Rest Of 2025 & Beyond

After years of strong sales and record growth, it was predicted at the start of the year firearms sales would see a decline in 2025.

Overall, gun sales did fall at the beginning of the year, yet there is still a chance the dreaded "Trump Slump" won't be as stark as previously feared. Retailers from across the country report the market for handguns remains robust this year, with several noteworthy trends emerging.

MICRO-COMPACT 9MMS ARE STILL KING — ANY CHALLENGERS?

Recent years have seen the micro-compact market surge, with these models now accounting for an 18% to 25% share and representing a quarter of all 9mm semi-automatic handguns sold. This isn't likely to change in the coming months, although other calibers are gaining momentum. The subcompact 9mm pistol may be king, but it will increasingly face usurpers vying for its crown.

"9mm is the go-to caliber. Now I have seen 10mm start to increase due to its ability to work in suburban areas as well as wilderness environments," noted Gerry Withag of Klik Klik Bang Firearms in Phoenix.

This sentiment was shared by Kai J. Bao of Appalachian Gun & Pawn in Jasper, Ga., who told *Shooting Industry* 10mm has been earning acclaim, especially from personal-defense experts and outdoor enthusiasts. He noted the caliber offers good ballistics, stopping power and size.

"9mm is regarded as the current gold standard for handgun carry; however, across many manufacturers, .380 is receiving a considerable revival due to its applicability within compact handguns, which can be designed and produced with greater concealability than their 9mm counterparts," suggested Bao.

"There is a fairly large number of high-capacity micro compacts," explained Kemlin Hart, owner of Hart Bros Guns & Ammo in Mason City, Iowa. "SIG P365s are losing favor due to media interaction, while GLOCKs do fairly well, which is kind of an all the time par to meet with."

The growth of the subcompact market also means 9mm is no longer the only game in town.

In speaking with dealers, praise was also offered for the 5.7x28mm pistols due to their high-velocity, low-recoil performance. In contrast, offerings in 6.5mm, particularly 6.5 ACP and 6.5mm Grendel, have found favor for their "precision plinking."

THE WHEEL TURNS FOR WHEELGUNS

Even as we're now a quarter of the way through the 21st century, the time-proven wheelguns that can trace their origin to the mid-19th century are still in favor with shooters across the country.

"Revolvers are always going to be ingrained in our heritage as Americans, whether you picture cowboys or detectives," noted Bao. "However, manufacturers such as Smith & Wesson and Ruger continue to innovate in the

wheelgun industry, and it keeps them relevant today."

"Revolvers continue to attract enthusiasts of both CCW and competition," added Edward [last name withheld by request], manager at GrabAGun in Coppell, Texas. He told *Shooting Industry* the leading brands in the wheelgun space include Smith & Wesson's Model 69 and Model 66, Ruger's GP100 and SP101 as well as Colt's King Cobra and Python reissue.

"These models blend time-tested reliability with modern ergonomics and finishing options," he continued.



"9mm is regarded as the current gold standard for handgun carry; however .380 is receiving a considerable revival due to its applicability within compact handguns."

**Kai J. Bao • Appalachian Gun & Pawn
Jasper, Ga.**

Bao concurred and praised the Smith & Wesson Model 327 TRR8, pointing out how it is a modern and improved iteration of the more classic 627.

"Ruger, on the other hand, keeps some of their revolvers more classically inspired, such as the Vaquero line. It utilizes a classic Colt-style single-action frame but has been enhanced with modern internals such as a transfer bar safety, coiled hammer spring and a loading gate actuated cylinder release," stated Bao. "These modifications allow the firearm to remain true to its heritage, but also relevant in the modern market."

In the Midwest, Hart acknowledged

wheelgun sales were on the slow side, but he told *Shooting Industry* Smith & Wesson is the dominant player in the centerfire world.

"Kimber has a great product; however, Kimber has hindered their sales in my mind," suggested Hart. "After being a Kimber Master Dealer for over a decade with price protection, they decided to reward the distributors with better deals than their loyal dealers, which in turn makes my inventory overpriced at a wholesale level."

The biggest drawback dealers found with wheelguns, based on consumer feedback, was the low round count, higher cost and limited caliber options.

EDUCATING THE DEALER, WHILE INCENTIVIZING SALES

There may have been a time, even in recent years, when firearms could sell themselves. This is not as much the case today, and even as consumers have endless options to conduct research online, manufacturers still need to step up their efforts in educating dealers.

Some are already taking the lead.

"GLOCK offers comprehensive in-dealer training kits, including videos and 'shoot-and-learn' guides, as well as point-of-sale displays," lends Edward of GrabAGun. He added, "SIG SAUER provides certified training courses dealers can host, plus digital marketing assets, while Canik and CZ have robust online portals with sales aids, range-day templates and staff certification quizzes."

In addition to those companies, the dealers told *Shooting Industry* Smith & Wesson and Springfield Armory are two more examples of companies in the industry that are doing an outstanding job providing materials for dealers, such as promotional products, customer rebates, law enforcement discounts, range packages or even rewards programs.

"The more common manufacturers, such as Smith & Wesson and Springfield Armory, are making more package deals, while other manufacturers, such as SIG SAUER and Taurus, are making

many color options to encourage ladies into the industry,” noted Withag.

Hart also drew attention to Smith & Wesson’s employee rewards program, which he described as the “best” he has seen in the industry.

STATE OF IMPORTS

As the country’s direction is to “Make America Great Again” and to buy American, the industry has seen some imported brands make inroads. These include SAR USA (Sarsilmaz), EAA (European American Armory) and Canik, all of which are gaining traction. Multiple factors contributed to the growth these companies have experienced.

GrabAGun’s Edward said this comes down to several key points, including excellent value for feature-rich pistols at aggressive price points; modern ergonomic designs that include polymer frames, optics-ready slides and adjustable backstraps; and strong import support, including rapid parts availability and local customer service.

“Canik is ‘hot, hot, hot’ — and has been for a while,” stated Hart. “SAR

makes great pistols; however, market traction is not great at either of my locations. EAA/Girsan seems to perform okay, however, not stellar. Price and features for the money are why Canik, for instance, is doing as well as it is, especially their trigger.”

You get what you pay for, a point echoed by shooting enthusiasts across



Canik is ‘hot, hot, hot’ — and has been for a while. Price and features for the money are why Canik, for instance, is doing as well as it is, especially their trigger.”

Kemlin Hart • Owner
Hart Bros Guns & Ammo
Mason City, Iowa

many online forums. Import brands can produce “clones” or close facsimiles of more well-known firearms and sell them at a much lower price than the genuine product, but this comes at the expense of authenticity.

COMPANIES TO WATCH, AND HOT BRANDS

Beyond the new import brands, other “up-and-coming” companies have the potential to garner more attention from customers in the coming months.

Hart told *Shooting Industry* a lot could depend on what makes it into the hands of influencers, where a good review can quickly put it in the spotlight. Both he and GrabAGun’s Edward suggested KelTec’s P-57, chambered in 5.7x28mm, was already generating buzz for its high capacity and low recoil.

“New boutique makers focusing on modular frames and drop-in ‘fire control units’ aim to combine customization with interchangeability,” added Edward.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

The final trend in handguns is in what may be the next must-have accessory: suppressors. For retailers, this could be something to shout about!

“In the near future, it is likely many new suppressor companies will rise in popularity as a result of President Trump’s ‘One Big Beautiful Bill Act,’ which will remove the \$200 tax stamp,” forecasted Bao.

While he wouldn’t go so far as to suggest shooting suppressed handguns is going to be “the norm,” primarily due to the complexity of some suppressor setups on handguns, Bao expects it to become much more popular.

“We’ll be seeing it more often, especially on rifles due to their more natural point of leverage,” he said.

The question will be whether retailers can keep pace.

“With lead times, low demand has become very high, and this is a great market segment to be in,” explained Hart. “I don’t see a lot of them on my range here; however, they are very popular for rifles in my area.” **SI**



It’s a family affair: Kemlin Hart (right) stands at the counter with his family in tow. Hart labeled Smith & Wesson’s employee rewards program the “best” in the industry. He also noted Canik and KelTec (P-57) are two brands generating buzz.



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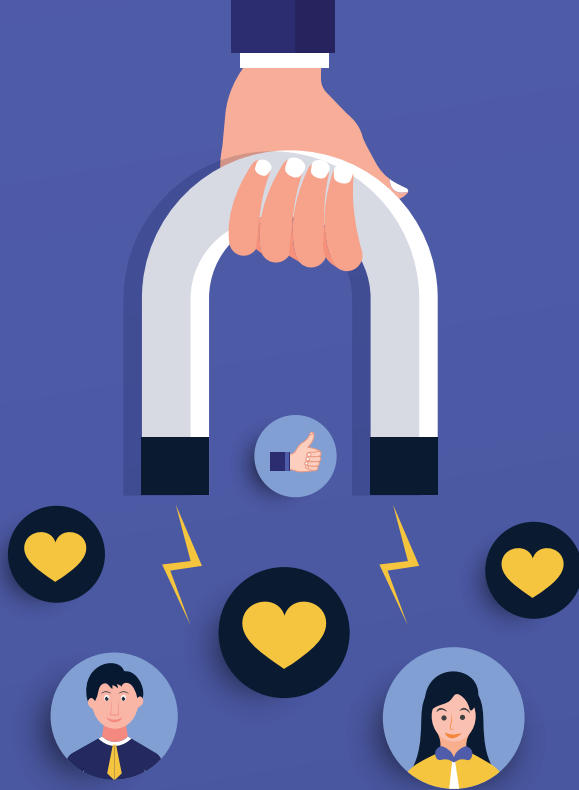
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Magnetize Your Sales With Gunsmithing

By Tim Barker

Adding a gunsmithing operation to your store can be a great way to help customers, expand business and stand out from the competition. But it's not something to jump into without considerable thought.

What services are you going to offer? What will you avoid? How are you going to make sure the segment turns a profit? And who, exactly, are you going to trust with your customers' treasured firearms?

That last question may be the one you need to answer first, suggests Larry Hyatt, owner of Hyatt Guns in

Charlotte, N.C., where they have a team of six gunsmiths on staff. Even when you have highly skilled smiths, there are going to be some mistakes.

"The biggest problem with gunsmithing is the talent," said Hyatt, who has the luxury of hiring from a local college with a two-year gunsmith degree program. "You're dealing with other people's property. And every once in a while, you get to buy somebody a gun because you screwed up."

Kurt Davis, whose shop has two full-time smiths, is co-owner of Accuracy Firearms in Effingham, Ill. He draws a distinction between "gunsmiths" and "gun mechanics."

"A mechanic is someone who fixes a broken part. They buy a part, take out the old part and put the new part in," he explained. "Our gunsmiths can make firing pins. They can make springs. If they can't get a part for a

gun, a lot of the time they can make it right here in the store."

Both stores offer a wide range of smithing services — with only a few exceptions (more on that in a bit). The key is they have complete faith in their smiths' ability to do any of the tasks they accept. They can't afford not to.

"It takes years to build a good reputation in business," Davis said, "and it takes five minutes to lose it."

LIMITS ARE OKAY

To have that level of confidence, it takes an honest assessment of your gunsmith's skills and the equipment available for use on various projects. It's also important to prioritize the services you want these smiths to offer.

Let's consider the milling of handgun slides for optics and sights. It's a service both stores have chosen not to offer.

Hyatt Guns has looked at it, but isn't ready to take the step, in terms of machinery and training.

"It's an investment of money and skill," he reasoned. "There's risk because you're cutting on other people's expensive property."

For Accuracy Firearms, it's more of an issue of the time it would take to add a new service.

"The biggest problem with gunsmithing is the talent. You're dealing with other people's property. And every once in a while, you get to buy somebody a gun because you screwed up."

Larry Hyatt • Owner/President
Hyatt Guns
Charlotte, N.C.

"We have the ability and the tools to do it," Davis shared. "The problem is our gunsmiths are tasked so heavily right now. I couldn't count the number of guns sitting in there waiting for work."

Other limits may vary by customer.

Accuracy Firearms offers full-service restorations. Does it mean every gun is a good candidate for the pricey return to its original form? The store occasionally deals with the unrealistic expectations of customers who come in with a beloved relative's old rifle or shotgun. Managing customer expectations is important.

"It means the world to them, but it's going to cost \$400 to get it up and running," Davis stated. "I mean, we'll do it if they want. But you're literally looking at a JCPenney special or Sears Roebuck special that isn't worth \$75."

This brings us to another key consideration. Customers are going to love having access to (and talking to) your gunsmith.

AVOIDING TIME SINKS

As soon as you bring a gunsmith into the building, it is certain there will be numerous customers eager to tap into this new knowledge base.

"Our gunsmiths get a lot of phone calls and a lot of questions. It's great to be able to offer answers, but no one sends them a check for the answers," Hyatt said. "So, there is a point where you've got to have some money coming in from them."

Both shops use a variety of strategies to make sure their smiths have time and space for the work they need to do.

For starters, Hyatt's gunsmiths are trained in how to disengage from conversations, without offending customers. But with a team of six, they can also afford to rotate smiths between the main store, a separate shooting range and the more secluded warehouse.

"The ones who work in the warehouse don't talk to the public or answer the phone very often, and they get a lot of work done," Hyatt noted. "The ones inside the building have to converse with customers. They're not

going to be able to produce as much work."

At Accuracy Firearms, other employees are trained to act as screeners for the gunsmiths.

"If somebody comes in and asks for the gunsmith, we don't just run back and grab our gunsmith," Davis said. "We'll inquire about what they need and whether we can help them first."

It also helps to have a large overhead display board listing prices for the services they offer. This alone cuts down on the need for many conversations about pricing.

"But there are times, too, when they have very specific questions, where the gunsmith does need to walk them through the process," Davis said.

"We have customers who drive two or three hours to bring us guns to work on because they trust our gunsmiths."

Kurt Davis • Co-Owner

Accuracy Firearms • Effingham, Ill.

In the end, one of the great things about having a gunsmith is that they bring extra business to your shop.

CUSTOMER MAGNET

It's why Hyatt is careful when assessing the gunsmithing side of the business. It's not as simple as comparing revenues against expenses.

"They're bringing people into the store. Sometimes these are high-wealth people," he elaborated. "If they have a good experience with a gunsmith, some percentage may become retail customers."

Davis sees the same thing.

This value is on full display whenever he needs to ask one of the gunsmiths to help out on the sales floor. They're able to offer authoritative insights on the guns — particularly in terms of reliability — that can't be beat.

Their knowledge, combined with the services they offer, goes a long way toward attracting and keeping new customers.

"We've been able to get customers who probably would have never walked in our door," Davis remarked. "We have customers who drive two or three hours to bring us guns to work on because they trust our gunsmiths." **SI**



Whether it's working on a customer's heirloom shotgun, lightening the trigger of their favorite pistol or enhancing the accuracy of their hunting rifle, Accuracy Firearms Gunsmith Clarence Funneman, Jr. is ready to serve customers. A competent in-house gunsmith like Funneman will bring in additional revenue to boost your store's sales each year.



WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT HUNTERS & TARGET SHOOTERS



SOUTHWICK
ASSOCIATES

— By Lee Leavitt

"Know your customer" is a pillar of many sales and marketing strategies. The value proposition is clear: If you know your customers and what drives them, you can better communicate how your goods may fit their needs. However, when it comes to figuring out who your customers are and what motivates them, things

are less clear.

For years, outdoor marketers have referred to five phases that people evolve through in their lifetimes as hunters. However, these five phases were identified based on a single study published nearly 40 years ago that focused primarily on male duck hunters in a single state.

Recently, Southwick Associates conducted a study

for the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service funding from excise taxes paid. The study sought to gain an understanding of *all* hunters and target shooters and what motivates them to participate in their chosen sport.

To accomplish this, more than 4,200 U.S. hunters and target shooters across the U.S. were surveyed

regarding their current and previous motivations for hunting and/or target shooting. Through advanced statistical analysis, hunters and shooters were grouped into distinct segments, referred to as "personas," based on their shared motivations to hunt and/or shoot.

While each individual is motivated by a unique set of factors, viewing hunters and target shooters through the lens of personas helps to make the behaviors of each group easier to understand. This research identified four key personas existing among U.S. hunters, and six key personas prevalent among U.S. target shooters that are described below.

THE FOUR HUNTER PERSONAS

1. Provider (25%)

Obtaining wild meat is the primary motivation, while sharing the game meat is also important for the Provider. This hunter persona is less interested in the social aspects of hunting, harvesting the largest or select game animals or using hunting to escape the daily grind. However, half still place a high value on enjoying nature and the outdoors as part of the ideal day afield. Compared to other personas, the Provider is most likely to pursue big game and least likely to pursue upland game birds.

2. Tranquil Hunter (27%)

The Tranquil Hunter uses hunting to relax, escape and experience the outdoors. Social reasons rate lower than any other hunter persona. Their ideal day in the field is relaxing and seeing wildlife in general. They report the highest rate

of not buying a hunting license in consecutive years, so efforts to retain this persona are essential.

3. Social Hunter (19%)

Hunting is a way for the Social Hunter to spend time with friends and family, to be part of a family or community tradition. Harvesting game is of lesser interest. They are the most interested in teaching others to hunt.

4. Enthusiastic Hunter (29%)

The Enthusiastic Hunter scores highest across many hunting motivations, including seeking new achievements, sharing their hunting experiences, mentoring and taking mature/select animals.

Although they rate the lowest in terms of social motivations and securing their own food, they are eager to establish themselves in the hunting community. They're more likely to rate themselves as an expert hunter despite being the youngest persona.

THE SIX TARGET SHOOTER PERSONAS

1. Fundamental Defender (21%)

Having the ability to defend themselves and others close to them motivates the Fundamental Defender. They want to be skilled and competent, but not necessarily expert. "Empowerment" resonates with them, while the social and recreational aspects of shooting have below-average



People's motivations change over time, and they do not necessarily evolve in a linear or predictable way.

appeal. Many members never grow out of this introductory persona; most see themselves in a learning role and have higher-than-average interest in face-to-face classes and instructional videos.

2. Skilled Guardian (21%)

The primary motivation

for the Skilled Guardian is to be prepared to defend themselves and others. Unlike the Fundamental Defender, they seek to continually improve their accuracy and proficiency. They report above-average experience and skills and are more likely to be asked for shooting advice than to seek it.

3. Challenge Chaser (19%)

Besides being one of the most experienced shooters, the Challenge Chaser wants to enjoy their personal time, often outdoors, through the challenge of target shooting. They have the lowest level of interest in the ability to defend themselves or others with a firearm. This is the

Continued on p. 49

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CLOSING STRONG

Make Accessories Essential To Every Gun Sale

By Annette Evans

A customer has bought a new gun from you. Hooray! They're about to leave with nothing else in hand. Less hooray.

Selling a gun is great, but of course, it's only a start. Let's be honest: Whether it's to a first-time buyer or a regular who picks up the hot new SHOT Show release as soon as it hits the shelves, we'd like them to buy a little more. It's not just for our bottom line; being a one-stop shop is good for everyone.

After all, a local place gives consumers an opportunity to go hands-on with things they might want to buy, and sets you up to support impulse purchases. The trick is figuring out how to get people buying more than just the gun.

One way is to walk them through all of the things they'll need or want on their gun owner journey, much like this:

Start with add-ons to the gun itself. Many pistols come with only two or three magazines. Many rifles, not so much. Experienced shooters know extras are good not only for more enjoyable range sessions, but in case of product failure — a point you can easily educate new shooters about.

A bundle discount for magazines can bump up the sale a little bit, with something equally good for both buyer and seller. Discount coupons usable on a return visit for magazines and other accessories can also work, with the bonus of getting them into the store again.

OFFER SERVICES

Don't stop there. Offer upgrade parts and services too. New sights? New grips? A replacement magazine release or trigger? There are many available that are reasonably simple to install, whether for the customer to do at home or through an in-house armorer or gunsmith at your store.

More involved performance and reliability upgrades can also be options, along with finishes like Cerakote or DuraCoat. The best time for many of these modifications is when the gun is new, so make it easy for buyers to tack them on to the sale. If you also sell pre-owned or consignment guns, including a basic expert inspection is a good idea, plus an option for a more detailed inspection before the purchase is final.

SAFE STORAGE & TRANSPORTATION

Your customer will also need some

way to store and transport their new gun. The plastic case that is (probably) included is prime for replacement with something of higher quality, more personalized or easier to take on trips. Of course, you can have a whole range of options.

All gun owners need to have a way to keep guns away from people who aren't or shouldn't be allowed access. You don't need to upsell a first-time buyer to the biggest safe that fits in the store; a single-pistol lock box would work for them too, maybe one that is easier to unlock than a padlock on the case that came with the gun and safer than the free trigger lock packaged with it. A frequent buyer? Perhaps it's time for them to get a safe that can fit their entire collection.



Breakthrough Lead & Soot Removing Wipes

Alternatively, portable hard-sided cases that can be locked and have sturdy latches can also be used for more secure storage than a cheap plastic box, plus they are great for

travel. Don't forget to have plenty of stickers available so a buyer can make it their own!

Soft cases are less bulky and more convenient when heading to the range, plus you can stock them in everything from basic, black nylon to wild colors and patterns to hand-tooled leather. Either type can be offered for the single gun they buy today, and for the multiples they have or will collect. Some are also included with or fit perfectly into range bags that can corral everything needed for an afternoon of shooting. The shopper already owns a range bag? How about a bigger or smaller one for different activities?

Education is always a perfect level-up to any gun purchase. Anyone can benefit from more knowledge about their new hardware or what they can do with it.

RANGE ESSENTIALS

Speaking of heading to the range, you can sell many things shooters need to stock up on for a productive and fun trip. Ammunition is obvious, but think about other consumables like targets in cardboard or paper; with splatter or reactive features; themes for games or holidays or self-defense; target pasters, patches and tape; and medical supplies for both basic and catastrophic injuries (gunshot wounds in particular).

Non-consumables such as magazine loaders, staplers, gun-specific tools and sport-specific gear are also helpful. Basically, think of everything you and your staff have once forgotten or wished you had when you went out shooting, and put them on the shelves. Take it one step further and package them together for an easy grab-and-go kit ready for a buyer to immediately take to the range

and try out their new gun.

If the buyer is new to guns entirely, they'll also need standard safety equipment such as hearing and eye protection. If they aren't so new, they might be interested in nicer versions, such as electronic earmuffs or safety glasses with interchangeable lenses are pointed out.



Clenzoil Three Gun Cobra Bore Cleaning Combo Kit

Even if they aren't shopping for those extras today, you can make them aware they don't have to wait for shipping when they are ready to buy. (The same goes, by the way, for holsters and other concealed carry gear, as well as specialty apparel like shooting vests and gloves — all of which also benefit from being able to see and touch before being bought.)

"CARE" ABOUT GUN CARE

And let's not forget, after being used, guns also need to be cleaned and maintained. Kits are an easy addition to the sale, either in the form of a compact version that can be tossed into a range bag or a larger, more complete kit that can be used to scrub down anything and everything. You can also get fancy and put some ultrasonic cleaners out for less dedicated cleaners.

If the customer is on a budget, bore snakes are attractive — even to people who already have normal cleaning kits. Don't forget cleaning solvents, oils and greases either, along with replacement and additional tools for what's in the kits you offer (think gloves, patches, brushes and swabs for the former, and gun-appropriate screwdrivers and Allen wrenches for

the latter).

Regardless of how (or if!) your customers clean their guns, think about stocking lead-remediation wipes and soaps, too. You can even send a customer out the door with some samples and a reminder of where to return when they need more.

EDUCATION OPENS THE DOOR TO MORE

Finally, last but not at all least, education is always a perfect level-up to any gun purchase. Anyone can benefit from more knowledge about their new hardware or what they can do with it. Your store may not have live-fire facilities available, but consider partnering with a local range or offering a range of non-shooting classes.

Basic safety and gun handling can be more productive in a classroom-only session, for instance, and topics like Stop the Bleed and other first-aid essentials are best taught in those environments. Ancillary instruction on ownership and use legalities, self-defense skills and strategies and gun maintenance and armorer techniques are also relevant. There's also room for introductions to hunting, shooting sports and reloading.



Hoppe's BoreSnake Viper

Remember when you were new to guns or introduced a loved one to the world of shooting? What did you learn, through trial and error, that you needed? Use your experience to guide gun buyers so they don't make the same mistakes others have already tripped over. The sky is the limit on what you can offer them. **GI**



“SURVIVAL” INSTINCT

Emergency Accessories Are Natural Attractions For Gun Buyers

By Bryan Hendricks

Many firearms enthusiasts keep supplies for natural disasters, but the “prepper” stigma discourages many gun shops from carrying emergency, off-grid supplies.

People buy firearms largely to protect their families from situational threats like random assaults and home invasions, but they also want to protect themselves and their families from violence and

predation during episodes of societal breakdown. The same customers also buy survival — or “prepper” — supplies when natural disasters knock out power and water.

These product lines are a compatible marriage, and retailers who position themselves as a one-stop shop for home defense and contingency preparation occupy a lucrative niche.

HOPE FOR THE BEST, PREPARE FOR THE WORST

Nothing illustrates this marriage more succinctly than Prepper Gun Shop in Grand Forks, N.D. The name says it all.

Cameron Davis, general manager, said, “We’re trying to help customers make sure they are in control of any situation they encounter, from home invasion to natural disaster.

It's about making sure our customers are prepared for anything that can happen. We hope for the best, but we prepare for the worst."

Prepper Gun Shop's firearms inventory covers the first-time gun buyer to the most seasoned buyer.

"We try to keep the barriers to our business as low as possible," Davis added. "We give a lot of encouragement. For the guy who's been buying from us for years, we try to make sure he can get another gun, to an older woman looking to buy her first gun for self-defense."

Dehydrated food and paracord are staples, but Davis noted he stocks supplies that have real-life applications for relevant situations in his community.



Zippo Emergency Fire Kit

"Remember the train derailment in Ohio [East Palestine, Ohio, Feb. 3, 2023]?" Davis asked. "Having gas masks and people having the ability to get them so they and their family can breathe is huge. Personal protective equipment — gas masks, hazmat suits, gloves, those sorts of things — is important for people to have if they need them. It sounds like profiteering; this

isn't the goal. When things do 'pop off,' people come looking for this stuff."

Fire-starting kits and power banks for smartphones and tablets are also necessary devices when the power goes out, Davis said.

"They're making interesting combo items, things that will charge a phone but also have a spark igniter on top," he shared.

Compact, multi-use items make it easier for customers to keep essential gear in a smaller footprint.

"We keep older tech, but newer tech will help people across a wider variety of applications instead of having backpacks full of everything they think they might need," he continued.

According to Davis, the development of newer and better emergency equipment is staggering. It's easy, he added, to "geek out" over new products.

"It's incredible. I wish I could explain it," he said. "I read new tech articles, watching what's coming out. I'm a gun guy, but people are making a new solution to a problem every day. I'm trying to make sure the best solutions get out to the masses."

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE

As with guns and gun accessories, the challenge is maintaining an inventory of things that actually sell.

"You sometimes get stuck," Davis acknowledged. "I had an older guy who taught me purchasing. He said you're going to have misses. Sometimes you're going to sit on a product. You have to be willing to take a loss or donate it. Take the loss and move on.

The consumer is the only one who matters. If the consumer wants more, I should have bought more. If they don't want it, I shouldn't have bought any. It's a delicate balance."

**IT'S ABOUT
MAKING SURE OUR
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WE HOPE FOR THE
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PREPARE FOR THE
WORST."**

Cameron Davis • General Manager
Prepper Gun Shop
Grand Forks, N.D.

Let's examine dehydrated food a bit further. If the power goes out for a week or more, as it did in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, or in North Carolina after Hurricane Helene, refrigerated food spoils quickly. If you were unable or unwilling to evacuate a disaster area, a homeowner needs non-perishable food.

"Foods are still selling, but I don't see massive spikes," Davis informed. "It's a constant stream of income. I mean, I've never called anyone who's ordered these food supplies and asked them, 'Did you eat it?' Grand Forks is an extremely strong community. You don't ask if all the stuff in the basement was used."

Food packets needing only boiling water are popular, but they're available in the camping sections of big-box retailers. Davis noted there is a constant demand for Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), which you can't readily get at Academy Sports + Outdoors or Walmart.

"It's a low-hanging fruit for folks getting started," he pointed out. "We don't have hurricanes in North Dakota, but we do have blizzards. You need food and water first. It's a good place for people to get their feet wet in disaster preparedness."

OUTFITTING RURAL PURSUITS

Umpqua, Ore., is another self-reliant community frequently inconvenienced by severe weather. It's also an outdoors-centered community, which strongly influences prepper preferences.



**North American Rescue
ROO Mini First Aid Kit**

Carlos Ortegon, owner of Umpqua Survival, said his business originated as strictly a prepper outlet, but he quickly realized there is considerable crossover among the prepper and gun-buying segments of the community.

"The original owner



An example of one of the promotional ads Prepper Gun Shop runs to expand brand awareness and sales.

created the business back in 2000 (Y2K), back when everyone was worried the world was going to collapse,” Ortegon recalled. “It was just survival stuff. He went real hard into the prepper supplies. It was a totally different vibe. He was also an electrician. He had a lot of off-grid stuff for people.”

Ortegon’s product lines aren’t restricted to traditional prepper gadgets. The community’s recreational interests require emergency preparedness.

“We’re a rural area,” he observed. “Everybody around here goes on mountain drives. They’re into fishing, camping and hunting. You don’t have to be a crazy prepper to be prepared for stuff you know is going to happen. I try to have the supplies people need if they break down on a mountain drive.”

First-aid supplies are in high demand, according to Ortegon, as are fire-starting supplies and compact

stoves. Jetboil stoves are very popular among his customers. He even sells gold-panning supplies.

The Gulf Coast has hurricanes. The Upper Midwest has blizzards. The Northwest has wildfires. When families are displaced, they need equipment to mitigate the impact.

“When wildfires get big, people lean hard on extra supplies,” Ortegon said. “Dehydrated foods are popular. We sell a lot of fire-starting stuff, a lot of paracord, a lot of first aid supplies and Jetboil stoves. We sell a lot of fuel, and we sell a lot of knives. I try to make sure to have the supplies people want readily available.”

Water filters and purifiers are essential equipment when water supplies are disrupted, but they also enable hunters, backpackers and anglers to drink safely from streams and even questionable water sources. Sawyer is a ubiquitous brand that offers

a versatile line of purifiers. MSR is also highly regarded. Sawyer is available almost everywhere, and high-quality filtration devices are available from REI, backpacker stores and online, but it’s important for a gun shop/prepper shop to have them, too.

“In an emergency, I need food and water first,” Ortegon said. “It’s a good place for people to step into disaster preparedness. People buy water purifiers when they first buy.”



Microtech Cypher II

Everybody sells knives, too, even home improvement stores and feed stores, but a person gearing up for emergencies is just as likely to buy a knife from a gun shop.

“Knives have been doing well for us the last year,” Davis said. “We sell a lot of automatic knives. Microtech comes to mind right off the bat. I appreciate brands like that because they cover your first knife purchase to an advanced purchase. I’ve watched some of these guys spend \$600 on a knife.”

KNOW YOUR MARKET

Knowing the community eliminates a lot of the guesswork that results in unsold merchandise. Carrying common-sense emergency supplies represents a healthier, more profitable business.

“Because of the way the internet is, a gun store selling just guns can’t survive,” Ortegon said. “We try to bring other folks in who are not just gun people. Backpackers and first responders come in here. Everyone around here, if they’re not working class themselves, they come from the working class. We have lots of outdoorsy people. We have a lot of people in the lumber industry — loggers, log truck drivers and mill workers.”

The sheriff is one of the store’s regular customers. Ortegon counts two county commissioners and a couple of state representatives as regular customers, as well.

“We’re also a good place for law enforcement to come and feel like they’re not going to be judged,” Ortegon continued.



ReadyWise One Week Emergency Food Supply

Guns are still the bread and butter for these stores, and gun buyers from such a diverse populace find plenty to like at Umpqua Survival, Ortegon noted.

“We have long guns, handguns, ARs, every gun you can think of,” Ortegon said. “We have ammunition, holsters and accessories. We have an AR building section. You can build an AR just off the parts we sell.”

IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE

In some communities, however, the prepper strategy simply does not fit.

One example is Sunrise Outfitters in Searcy, Ark., a bedroom community for Little Rock. Jen Childers, operations manager, said life here is sedate, and the prepper community is not big enough to support this type of emphasis. If somebody wants emergency supplies, Childers says she orders it for them online.

“**BECAUSE OF THE WAY THE INTERNET IS, A GUN STORE SELLING JUST GUNS CAN'T SURVIVE. WE TRY TO BRING OTHER FOLKS IN WHO ARE NOT JUST GUN PEOPLE.”**

Carlos Ortegon • Owner
Umpqua Survival
Umpqua, Ore.

“I don't have a whole lot of customers wanting survival products,” Childers confirmed. “I carried survival food for a while, but it didn't work well in this store. I had some of that stuff sit around for two or three years and didn't move it. I have 2,000 firearms in stock, which is what people come in here for.”

Ditto for World Wide Weapons in Bryant, Ark., about five minutes west of Little Rock. This hard-core gun shop pitched for preppers for a time, but the store never established a prepper identity. A few tubs of dehydrated food in a far corner are all that remain of the effort.

Again, this strategy requires knowing the community and integrating a prepper identity into a retailer's culture. It doesn't always fit, but where it works, it works very well. Your customers will let you know quickly, in most cases. **SI**

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By Anne Conrad

INSIDE LAKE ERIE ARMS

Redefining The Modern Indoor Range

Just off the banks of Lake Erie, in Milan Township, Ohio, stands a state-of-the-art, world-class indoor shooting facility that might challenge the preconceived notion of modern ranges. There's a restaurant, classy bourbon bar with edible scorpions and the crowning touch, an *indoor trap house*. (Get outta here!)

Lake Erie Arms (LEA) isn't just a nice building with a few shooting bays and retail products; every square inch has purpose. In March 2025, LEA earned the prestigious NSSF 5-Star Rating. The goal is to bring gun enthusiasts in the door and keep them coming to shoot, learn and socialize. Lake Erie Arms is an experience-driven range with traditional range

amenities, coupled with gracious hospitality oozing with creativity.

TWO MEN, ONE VISION

Jim West, an insurance and real estate broker, along with his brother-in-law, Brent McConnell, a former Huron (Ohio) police officer, wanted to change the direction of their lives. They had a vision for what could be and started teaching CCW classes together. They built their first brick-and-mortar retail shop to sell guns, ammunition and accessories in addition to their classes. A customer visited the store and told them they needed a range in the back; they agreed and began the journey.

A (SHOOTING) STAR WAS BORN

To get a better understanding of how this remarkable shooting complex was created, I

interviewed West, LEA CEO and co-founder, and Shelby Brossia, VP of business development. In our candid interview, I learned how guts, drive, keen business acumen, and surrounding yourself with positive people and experts build a healthy range. West and McConnell researched and reached out to many shooting ranges before they dove into the range business.

"You will start to notice a pattern as we talk. I'm not one to reinvent the wheel. I search for people who have succeeded and ask them how they did it. That is how I ended up in Provo, Utah, at a three-day Action Target Range Development and Design Seminar." West said. "I feel like I received a PhD in shooting-range building in those three days!"

Finding the experts is imperative to the process of building or expanding your range. You may have some ideas that have been tried that failed, and you may not

have thought of everything. Of the many experts West and McConnell sought advice from, the Action Target Range Development and Design Seminar helped to clear up many questions.

In the Range Development and Design Seminar, topics included:

- Range design and equipment
- How to identify a range location
- Navigation of city planning, zoning and permitting
- Lead mitigation
- Range ventilation and HVAC
- Managing range and retail spaces
- Public relations
- Tour of ranges

ROCK-STAR TOUR

After the Action Target Seminar, West, McConnell and a friend loaded up a van for a "rock-star" tour of 20 large ranges across several states in just five days to take notes and understand them better.

"We chose ranges we wanted to emulate," West said.

According to West, they needed to be over 20,000 sq. ft., have more than just pistol bays, at least one additional special element and a restaurant of some kind — which was a non-negotiable piece of the puzzle.

"Doing this tour helped cement our vision," he added. "We asked what they did right, wrong and what they would do differently."

THE TOPSHOT CLAY HOUSE: ONE OF A KIND

Despite the short clay shooting season, Ohio is one of the biggest clay shooting states in the country. The "center showpiece" of LEA

is the TopShot Clay House, and is crucial to the building design.

There are only a handful of indoor clay shooting ranges in the world, so the design of the LEA clay house was very carefully planned. There also wasn't any software that would work, and West — a clay-shooting enthusiast — knew they needed to be able to have a significant number of shooters at the same time to make a profit.

LEA worked with a software developer who was also a shooting enthusiast to design the patent-pending software. West shared 32 people could use the clay range at the same time, with eight bays especially for leagues.

GROWTH, MEMBERSHIP & COMMUNITY IMPACT

LEA is committed

to its community; it has created well over 100 job opportunities for residents of the Milan Township area. Of its approximately 3,800 members, a whopping 44% are women. Additionally, LEA supports youth camps, local law enforcement, women's self-defense groups and partners with Civilian Marksman Program (CMP) held at Camp Perry each July.

TAKEAWAYS

If you're reading this to learn more about starting a range or expanding your current offering, here are some suggestions based on what Lake Erie Arms has done.

- Enroll in the Action Target Range Design and Development Seminar in Provo, Utah.
- Work with the NSSF 5-Star Rating program to gain

your best possible rating.

- Find experts who can help you along. Don't try to reinvent the wheel; use their advice to tailor your range to suit your vision.

- Tour other ranges. Really study the ranges you want to emulate and ask questions.

- Think outside of your circle and about how you can positively impact the community.

If you are interested in opening a new range, upgrading your current range, wish to shoot at an indoor trap range or get your name on the wall by eating a scorpion chased with fine bourbon, take a day or two to experience Lake Erie Arms. And after your visit, maybe chase a few walleyes. You'll be glad you did. **SI**

For more info: learms.net

A 94,000 SQUARE-FOOT SHOOTING EXPERIENCE

Lake Erie Arms isn't just a facility, it is a case study in reimagining range building, range operations and building a customer experience from the ground up.

Standout amenities available to range guests and members include:

- The crown jewel, the TopShot Clay House, which allows up to 32 people simultaneously!
- (16) Interactive 25-yard lanes
- (4) 100-yard lanes
- Caliber Club lounge and event space
- VIP suites for events
- A 90,000 sq. ft. fully stocked retail center

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SCAN ME



◀ Ruth Abel Boyer and her father, Mark Abel, attend a shooting match fundraiser for their alma mater, Grace College, in Winona Lake, Ind.

By Nancy Keaton

BUILDING TOMORROW'S SHOOTERS TODAY

What Retailers Can Learn From One Girl's Journey

When Ruth Abel Boyer first started shooting with her dad, Mark Abel, neither of them imagined it would ignite a passion that would shape not only her future but also the future of other young people. Her journey is more than just a personal success story; it shows how teaching kids to shoot can create wonderful memories, strong communities and lifelong relationships — and also create an investment in the future of the industry.

ALL IT TAKES IS ONE

Boyer attended a small private Christian high school. Her graduating class only had around a dozen students.

"We were so small we didn't have any sports," laughs Boyer. Then a friend

of her dad's wondered if kids would be interested in trap shooting if he would step up to coach. Of course, the kids were interested, and so it began. He got the team set up and registered them in the Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) and the Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA). Boyer and her brother were two of the competitors.

"He was such an awesome guy for doing that for us," Boyer beams.

Fast-forward to college. The SCTP sponsors a college fair where any college with a shooting sports program can attend and set up an informational booth. At these events, students can meet coaches and recruiters and see what schools offer. "Because it's kind of a lesser-known sport and program, a lot of schools don't advertise it as much, and kids have a harder time finding somewhere to go if they want to continue

shooting in college," Boyer explains. "It's a really great opportunity for the kids to meet colleges and recruiters and go to schools they didn't realize had that kind of program."

At one of these college events, Boyer met staff from Grace College in Indiana.

"I was excited because it's where my dad went to college, although they didn't have the program when he was there. I got to meet the coach and the recruiter and it felt like we fit well. I liked the school and I received a small scholarship to go there and keep shooting," she shared.

Boyer shot competitively during all four years of college.

"It's an expensive sport. It's not like you reuse a shell like in baseball or soccer, where you reuse the ball. You get one shot and that's it, so it's a lot more expensive. So, when the program first started, they were only practicing maybe once every other week, and then by the time I graduated we were practicing three times a week," she recalled.

FROM COMPETING TO COACHING

As the program grew, the head coaches wanted to retain some of the more experienced students to help coach, so they sent Boyer to NSSA-NCSA (National Skeet Shooting Association-

National Sporting Clays Association) to be certified as an NSSA Level 1 Coach.

Boyer says there is an added benefit to the credential.

"It puts parents at ease when they're sending their kids off to college and all of the coaches are certified," she pointed out.

Boyer met her husband, Samuel, on the shooting sports team and he's also a certified coach. They live an hour away from Grace College and are both still active, helping coach the students.

Boyer reflects on her journey from learning to shoot to competing to coaching.

"It really shaped me. I think the biggest impact was the responsibility and growth. I met a lot of good people and made a lot of wonderful connections. It helped me mature. There's a certain level of trust everybody has within the sport. You really grow and develop as a person as you grow and develop your skills. I was the recruiter for the team my last two years of college and now I get to be on the SCTP board. I've learned a lot and had a lot of opportunities because of it."

"Everything about this sport is expensive, so helping with the startup costs and funding these programs is vital to helping kids to be able to participate. This experience is something these kids can take with them for life."

Ruth Abel Boyer

Boyer shared having connections is also how she ended up as a proud member of the SCTP Board. An older gentleman was ready to retire and was looking for a replacement to fill his position. He wanted it to be someone who loved kids as much as he did, and who also loved the sport. Since he knew Boyer well, and knew her experience, he asked if she would be interested in serving on the board.

"He asked me two weeks before I was getting married," she laughs, "So, I asked him to give me a little time."

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Of course, she said yes, and began her work on the board in the summer of 2024. Boyer is now in charge of organizing the state tournaments, from finding the location to setting the dates, to managing the system where everyone signs up, to making sure the facilities are set up. And of course, fundraising.

"We get grants from IYSSF, which is the Indiana Youth Shooting Sports Foundation, and they're a huge donor. They pay all the entry fees for all the state tournaments, they provide the trophies and sometimes, when they have money left over, they give some back to the teams to help cover other costs," she explained. "So, we work really closely with them. They're awesome."

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Returning to the fact shooting skeet is an expensive sport, Boyer shares ideas on how retailers and sponsors can help young people enter and continue in the shooting sports.

When her husband was in high school, they had a trap program as well, and he was able to purchase a gun from a local gun dealer and they "sponsored him." They didn't give him the gun, but he wore their hat and they gave him a discount on purchases. His picture also hung in the store.

"Having his picture hanging up was really neat for a high school student,"

smiles Boyer.

She wants these opportunities for other kids as well.

"It's a very expensive sport, so there are a lot of kids who want to be involved, but they would have to shoot their dad's 70-year-old gun. So, maybe a dealer could partner with their local 4-H or SCTP program and offer deals on guns or on ammo or anything like that. It would lessen the burden for the parents and for the kids," explains Boyer.

She continues, "Everything about this sport is expensive, so helping with the startup costs and funding these programs is vital to helping kids be able to participate. This experience is something these kids can take with them for life. My husband and I shoot together all the time; it's what we love to do. We still shoot with our coaches and friends and family. So, it's just a great thing to develop within a kid, and then it passes on to their friends and family and then the next generation."

Boyer concludes by thanking all the programs that sponsor the youth programs and the kids.

"I love to watch the kids grow and develop," she reflects. "You can really see how the investment affects these kids and how it improves not only their scores but the friendships and the relationships they build. So just know a lot of these things couldn't happen without the support of retailers and sponsors." **\$1**

NEW PRODUCTS

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SHOOTINGINDUSTRY.COM/CATEGORY/FIRST-LOOK

By Jenna Buckley



HIDAKA XR

SOG

(877) 269-8490
sognives.com

SOG builds on its Hidaka knife series with the **HIDAKA XR**. Featuring a modified Tanto shape, its 4" blade crafted from ultra-tough CPM 3V steel offers exceptional durability and edge retention for demanding outdoor tasks. Attached to the redesigned blade is a lightweight, textured Micarta handle that provides a solid, slip-resistant grip, while the SOG XR locking mechanism holds firm under up to 1,500 lbs. of force. Also new to the series is the **HIDAKA FX**, a fixed knife purpose-built for the outdoors. The 4.8" blade features premium CRYO 3V steel with a satin finish and a razor-sharp edge. Its Micarta handle offers a secure, no-slip grip and resists moisture, heat and impact.



DAVIDSON'S INC.

(800) 367-4867
davidsoninc.com

In collaboration with Smith & Wesson, Davidson's **EXCLUSIVE MODEL 940** is a 9mm revolver with modern improvements. The concealed hammer helps create a snag-free design essential to concealed carry. The barrel, frame and cylinder's stainless steel finish are complemented by the VZ Diamond Black Cherry grips. The grips themselves are contoured to allow the use of the included moon clips. A serrated U-notch rear sight is paired with an XS tritium night sight up front. The 2.17" barrel and the five-shot cylinder are fluted. Three moon clips are included. Overall width is 1.31", overall height is 4.375" and it weighs 23.52 oz.

RCBS

(530) 538-2699
rcbs.com

RCBS expands its **X-DIE SERIES OF DIES WITH A 6.5 CREEDMOOR FULL-LENGTH SIZER DIE**. The die series features a patented mechanism that eliminates the need for repeated trimming after initial case prep. Unlike standard full-length sizing dies, the X-Die uses a specialized mandrel system that precisely limits case growth during sizing — saving time while preserving critical dimensions for accurate shooting.



STREAMLIGHT INC.

(800) 523-7488
streamlight.com

Streamlight's **SIDEWINDER COMPACT III** is an ultra-compact, high-performance, multi-fuel flashlight with multiple LED sources and is available in three models: user-configurable, military and aviation. Each LED operates at multiple brightness levels and includes a strobe mode. The light uses either one AA alkaline or one 3-volt CR123A lithium battery. The light's white LED provides up to 275 lumens and 3,200 candela on High with a beam distance of 113 meters. It is IPX7 waterproof to 1 meter for 30 minutes and impact-tested to 3 meters.



NORTHERN PRECISION

(315) 955-8679
npcustombullets.com

Premium heavy hitter **HANDGUN BULLETS ARE NOW AVAILABLE IN .429, .452, .475 AND .500** from Northern Precision. The hunting bullets have thin and heavy jackets with bonded core and non-bonded TC flat tips. .429 and .452 Spitzers for single-shot handguns. The .475 and .500 are made from drawn .50-cal BMG jackets for tough, heavy wall jackets that will expand in game. A lead base guard bullet for plinking and small game is also available.



SMITH & WESSON BRANDS INC.

(800) 331-0852
smith-wesson.com

The **M&P SHIELD X** series from S&W represents a sub-compact platform of the Shield family. The Shield X is chambered in 9mm, with capacities of 13+1 and 15+1 for standard models, and 10+1 for a compliant variant. It boasts an improved ergonomic frame design, including a lengthened grip, undercut trigger guard and extended beaver tail. Upgraded features include aggressive front and rear serration coverage, a 3.6" stainless steel barrel, and an Ameriglo Trooper LumiGreen front night sight and blacked-out serrated U-notch rear sight. An integrated front rail and squared-off trigger guard allows users to mount a variety of light and laser accessories and an RMSC/K optics-ready footprint provides direct-mount red dot capabilities.



VORTEX OPTICS

(800) 486-7839
vortexoptics.com

The **RANGER HD 3000 10X42 LASER RANGEFINDING BINOCULAR** from Vortex Optics combines modern HD optics with precise ranging capabilities, all in a compact platform to keep hands free to hunt. With a maximum reflective range of 3,000 yards, 1,500 on game, these powerful new binoculars are ideal for big-game, predator and archery hunters. The HD optics are optimized to deliver excellent color fidelity, edge-to-edge sharpness and light transmission.

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NEW PRODUCTS



STURM, RUGER & CO. INC.

(336) 949-5200
ruger.com

Ruger expands its 9mm RXM pistol line with a **FACTORY-INSTALLED THREADED BARREL MODEL** (1/2"x28). It sports a spare guide rod assembly featuring an 18-lb. recoil spring to tune the function of the pistol with an installed suppressor. The removable serialized stainless steel Fire Control Insert (FCI) set inside an interchangeable Magpul Enhanced Handgun Grip (EHG) delivers maximum flexibility and customization. The slide allows for direct optic mounting of RMR, Delta Point Pro (DPP) and RMSc-pattern optics. Safety features include integrated trigger safety, internal striker blocker and an inspection port for visual confirmation of the chamber. Two Magpul PMAG 15 GL9 15-round magazines are included.

XS SIGHTS

(888) 744-4880
xssights.com

XS **MINIMALIST** night sights are now available for Colt Python revolvers. The sights are designed for shooters who want a simple and effective notch-and-post sight. The front sight features a tritium center surrounded by a glow dot that comes in two color options — green or orange — to best suit individual preference. The windage-adjustable rear sight is a serrated, blacked-out anti-glare notch with a wider width to help drive the eye to the front and quickly align the user's sight.



5.11 TACTICAL

(866) 451-1726
511tactical.com

5.11 is now offering an Iron Grey colorway in its **STACHE SNEAKER** collection, designed in collaboration with The Firearm Blog's James Reeves. Iron Grey sneakers have a dark grey canvas exterior. This iteration boasts all the trademark features as the original, including a Vibram bottom, Ortholite insole and the signature "stash" pocket on the shoe's tongue perfect for stowing valuables.

top persona for shotgun sports and traditional rifles.

4. Sociable Target Shooter (15%)

Sociable Target Shooters rank target shooting's importance in their lives lower than all other personas, but it is a way to spend time with others. Accuracy, precision and the number of rounds fired are less important than the time spent with others when target shooting. Social Target Shooters prefer traditional rifles more than other personas and are the least likely to use modern sporting rifles.

5. Skills Seeker (13%)

For the Skills Seeker, target shooting is all about acquiring a new skill. Personal defense and the thrill of shooting rate very low. They have the least experience, with 85% shooting 10 years or less. Nearly two-thirds say they are more likely to ask for advice than to share with others. They are much less likely to see the cost of ammunition as a barrier.

6. Fun Seeker (11%)

For the Fun Seeker, target shooting is thrilling and a way to enjoy themselves. They shoot for recreation and enjoyment, not to develop new skills or for defensive purposes. A Fun Seeker is more interested in trying new shooting styles and finding new places to shoot compared to other personas.



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SHIFTING MOTIVATIONS

In addition to defining these key hunter and target shooter segments, the research yielded another critical insight — *people's motivations change over time*, and they do not necessarily evolve in a linear or predictable way.

As in many other areas of life, the paths people take are varied and their underlying motivations for choosing any given path, or “segment” in our case, are complex. Target shooters may gain, lose and trade motivations over time, and in some cases, what motivates them to shoot later in life

can be completely different than what motivated them to start.

Understanding these key personas and what drives them to participate is key to knowing your customer, and smart marketing recognizes people's motivations to hunt and target shoot vary.

If you're interested in viewing these segments in more depth, including their demographic make-up, top five motivations, participation rates and more, a summary brochure and technical report are available at www.southwickassociates.com/hunt-shoot-personas-24. **SI**

INDUSTRY LINK

Continued from p. 50

To our contributing editors, your relationships with dealers and industry professionals enhanced our goal of helping industry businesses be successful. Industry stalwarts like Massad Ayoob and Carolee Anita Boyles have been on staff with *SI* longer than I've been alive, and it was an honor collaborating with them. Over the past 10 years, I've been thrilled to add to our talented group of writers — Tim Barker, Ashley McGee, Bryan Hendricks, Doug VanderWoude, Nancy Keaton and Hank



Let's keep building the next generation of sportsmen and women to carry on the legacy of this incredible industry.

Yacek, to name a few.

And, lastly, to our readers: empowering, educating and equipping

you has been fundamental to our success as a publication. You're the “why” behind what we sought to achieve with each issue. Remember, you're the face of the industry; be intentional with your first impressions and community involvement. Be the welcoming tracker and hunter.

From the first print issue 70 years ago to these final words: thank you for trusting *SI* as part of your business journey. Now, let's keep building the next generation of sportsmen and women to carry on the legacy of this incredible industry. **SI**

The Final Chapter

BY JADE MOLDAE

THE FINAL CHAPTER

Since launching as the industry's business magazine 70 years ago, *Shooting Industry* has witnessed a lot of history. The Cold War. Space exploration. The Civil Rights Movement. The internet. Y2K. 9/11. A global pandemic. 45-47.

Through seven decades, the goal of this publication has remained the same: to champion storefront dealers and range operators — the industry's backbone — and help them be profitable.

However, as the saying goes, "All good things must come to an end." For *Shooting Industry's* print edition, the end rests here with the October 2025 issue.

There's one final thought-provoking topic I wanted to present to you before we turn the page on this storied publication.

BE A HUNTER AND A TRACKER

This summer, I spent some time in the U.K. on a family vacation. The ubiquitous London black taxis were everywhere, as were the vinyl advertisement wraps adorning them. One such advertisement — out of the scores that could be seen while traversing Oxford Street — stood out to me: "Be a *hunter*. Not a tracker." Not able to capture a good-quality picture of the clever advert, I quickly wrote it down in the Notes app on my iPhone to earmark it for a future column idea.

The "Be a *hunter*. Not a tracker." tagline comes from U.K.-based fund manager Artemis Investment Management, which alludes to the approach the firm takes when it comes to

hunting for profits. This mindset applies to more than just investments, of course.

In your business, do you see yourself as a hunter or a tracker? Are you proactive and aggressive in pursuing fresh opportunities? Or are you more patient and reactive, following the trends of the market and what others around you are doing? Do you take both approaches, depending on the situation?

It begs the question: Is one approach intrinsically better than the other? Hunters will benefit from being an early adopter and trendsetter in their area. On the other hand, though, trackers can observe what the hunters have done and identify ways to improve or build upon hidden value — or elect to avoid a strategy entirely if it fell flat elsewhere.

When expanding an investment portfolio, it may be more advantageous to be a hunter than a tracker. In our industry, however, success requires both attributes to navigate the market's ups and downs. It wouldn't hurt to have a steady dose of gumption and business grit to stay energized and effective while leading your team.

NOTHING WITHOUT THE PEOPLE

The *Shooting Industry* brand would be meaningless without the people. We've had a "lean and keen" team for the entirety of my tenure at the magazine (which started with the May 2013 issue).

I had the great privilege of learning from Russ Thurman, my predecessor and mentor, for several years before his well-earned retirement in Dec. 2018. He set

the standard we've strived to maintain, and our team has done an admirable job since he passed the baton to us nearly seven years ago. I'd be remiss if I didn't take a moment to acknowledge them.

Associate Editor Jenna Buckley is one month shy of nine years in her role. In that time, she's become our resident new products guru, penning literally thousands of write-ups. She's turned condensing lengthy press releases and repurposing sterile product spec sheets into an art form; her work in the *New Product Showcase* and *Newsmakers* columns defines "turnkey."

Natalie Harger's role as the art director for *SI* started on an initial three-month contract that began with the June 2016 issue. She's elevated the design of our publication in every facet — surpassing that original trial run by a significant margin along the way, to the tune of 112 total issues!

Lori Robbins has played a key behind-the-scenes role over the years, working with our advertising partners to confirm ads were up to spec and shepherding the production of the print issue, ensuring its (on time!) approval at the printer each month. She also assembles the successful Dealer Advantage weekly e-newsletter, which will be the primary *SI* communication vehicle moving forward. (If you haven't yet, sign up here: shootingindustry.com/dealer-advantage.)



Leverage your position in the industry to help further the shooting sports and gun ownership to even more potential users.

To our advertising partners: Without a large paid circulation or newsstand distribution, your investment in the print and digital versions of *SI* fueled our efforts for decades. Hopefully you can leverage your leadership position in the industry to help further the shooting sports and gun ownership to even more potential users.

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