

HUNTING

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RETAILER

March/April 2021 | Hide & Seek

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HUNTING

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Benelli USA Makes Financial Contribution to NSSF

Benelli USA announced a financial contribution of \$50,000 to the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) to support their leadership and advocacy in protecting the firearm business and ensuring the industry's future. Their mission to promote and preserve recreational shooting and hunting has been evident during the COVID-19 outbreak. The NSSF worked tirelessly to ensure the firearm industry was categorized as an essential business.

"The NSSF is one of the most important groups in the firearms and outdoor industry," said Benelli USA General Manager Tom DeBolt. "It is critically important to not only praise their dedication but support them financially as well. We appreciate the leadership of Joe Bartozzi, Larry Keane and their

team who continue to advocate for our industry and lead the NSSF organization during these challenging times."

This contribution comes on the heels of the donation of \$100,000 to NSSF's #GUNVOTE Voter Education Campaign from Benelli USA this past September.

"In the coming year, our industry will face many new challenges, and the support of firearm industry leaders like Benelli USA will help us meet and overcome those challenges," said Joe Bartozzi, NSSF president & CEO. "We can't say thank you enough to Benelli for this generous contribution and for its outstanding leadership in ensuring a strong future for our industry."

Sellmark Accelerates Growth With Headquarters Expansion

Despite a hectic 2020, Sellmark expanded its brands, product offerings and workforce, and now Sellmark is adding a 50,000 square-foot building to its international headquarters.

According to CEO James Sellers, "Mansfield has been a fantastic community to grow our business. This city has been wonderful for our employees and their families, and we can't wait for this next phase of development."

The new two-story building will feature exclusive conference rooms, a large showroom, two weight rooms, cardio machines, a yoga room, basketball

court, luxury cafeteria with smoothie bar, a breakroom, café, coffee bar, covered patio, observation balcony, nature trails, a wellness center for employees and other amenities. These additions will offer healthy options for employees for exercise, nutrition, nature connectiveness and wellness.

The additional space will also provide extra warehouse capacity, expanded internal production facilities and a product development floor to support Sellmark's future growth and success.

Binks Construction CEO Steve Binkley has given December 2021 as the work's completion date.

Blaser Group Acquires Liemke Thermal Optics

Blaser Group is pleased to announce the acquisition of Liemke Thermal Optics. Headquartered in Bielefeld, Germany, Liemke is the dominant thermal imaging brand in Germany trusted for its performance, reliability and outstanding customer service.

Liemke thermal optics will soon be available to hunters and shooters in the United States through Blaser Group. Introductory offerings include the Merlin, Keiler, and Sperber lines. Merlin thermal imaging devices can be clipped directly onto any hunter's daytime riflescope or be used as a monocular, while the Keiler family of products are designed for

use as handheld monoculars. Sperber scopes are multifunctional and can be used as a monocular or as a thermal riflescope.

"We are excited to add this premium brand of well-priced, high-performance thermal optics to our product portfolio," said Jason Evans, CEO, Blaser Group. "Liemke is at the forefront of technology, delivering the precision and performance of German engineering, making it a top choice for hunting, game detection and nighttime shooting applications."

For more information, visit Liemke.com.

Beretta Holding Acquires Holland & Holland

Beretta Holding, the parent company of Beretta, has signed an agreement for the acquisition of 100% of Holland and Holland Ltd. The deal took effect February 1, 2021 (terms and conditions were not disclosed).

In a press release, the company stated, "Beretta Holding had been looking to acquire a premium luxury brand, and Holland & Holland is a fitting partner, fulfilling all the elements of the finest gun-making: a rich history, independent manufacturing facilities and outstanding products. Beretta Holding wishes to preserve the precious heritage of Holland & Holland in the United Kingdom with a high dedication to skilled craftsmanship."

Pietro Gussalli Beretta, President and CEO of Beretta Holding, declared: "This is a truly exciting development and a great achievement for the Beretta family, further increasing the Group's international footprint. Faced with the Brexit challenges, I am very pleased to increase our direct presence in the important UK market, where we are already active with our well-established distribution subsidiary."


For more information about Holland & Holland, please visit www.hollandandholland.com.

Mossberg Donates \$75,000 to NSSF

O.F. Mossberg & Sons, Inc. announced a donation of \$75,000 to the National Shooting Sports Foundation following the cancellation of the 2021 Shooting Hunting & Outdoor Trade Show. The 42nd annual SHOT Show, scheduled to take place in January 2021, was canceled due to potential health risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We're very disappointed we won't be able to gather in Las Vegas this year for SHOT Show, and I believe that sentiment is held across the entire industry," said John MacLellan, Vice President of Sales and Marketing. "Given the unfortunate recent rise of COVID-19 infections on a global level, and the precautions that are being taken regarding slowing the spread of the virus, we fully support NSSF's decision to cancel the upcoming show. We also understand that most of NSSF's annual operating expenses are generated through SHOT Show every year, which is why we're pleased to announce that Mossberg intends to donate \$75,000 to help NSSF maintain normal business operations in 2021." **HR**





This month's cover brought to you by:



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BRENTON USA builds the industry's most advanced modern hunting rifle (MHR) based on the popular AR platform. Designed and field tested by hunters for hunters, their rifles are purpose-built and specifically suited to meet the needs of the most demanding hunter.

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Hunter-sized features make BRENTON MHR's effortless to operate, even with gloved hands. Another stand-out feature is the BT-1 drop-in trigger (also sold separately). The BT-1 is everything a hunter demands from a trigger – smooth, crisp and user adjustable from 3.5 to 6.5 lbs. pull weight.

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For more information on all BRENTON USA products, please visit: <https://www.brentonusa.com>



The Facts About Employer Feedback

Regularly asking for and receiving candid performance evaluations is a developmental tool every employee should master.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

Most workers dread performance reviews, which more often than not are tedious and nonproductive exercises. So imagine what jobs would be like if employees received a mini appraisal, say, every week. Or even daily. And for the real kicker: What if these employees liked the reviews so much they requested them?

If that sounds like the workplace from hell populated with gluttons for punishment, guess again. In reality, consistently asking for — and gracefully receiving — feedback is a powerful tool for not only career advancement, but greater job satisfaction and engagement, says Beth Wagner, a master facili-

tator at Fierce Inc., a leadership-development consulting firm.

In a webinar sponsored by the Human Capital Institute, Wagner notes that regular and consistent feedback can be much more worthwhile to employees than annual reviews. But the shame of it is that while it's both a valuable and critical leadership competency that every employee should master, it's also highly underutilized — an under-the-radar solution to much of what ails businesses in terms of disengaged employees and high turnover rates.

In fact, one survey showed that companies encouraging regular employee feedback recorded 15% less turnover than companies

where employees don't receive regular feedback. Another study shows that the best leaders in business regularly ask for feedback, which clearly indicates it's a valuable skill.

But if feedback is so important, why isn't it used more often as an employee development tool? The truth of the matter is that asking for feedback is a frightening prospect for many employees, Wagner says. After all, it's human nature to want to hear only good things — and an honest assessment of your performance very well could reveal you're not the superstar you believe you are. Furthermore, providing candid feedback is also hard for many managers; more of-



ten than not, they'd rather steer clear of conflicts.

What can Joe and Jane Employee do to get a seat on the feedback train? Wagner says the following five tips will jump-start the journey.

1. Start asking for it.

Remember the old adage about ask and you shall receive? The same is true for feedback. Too many people wait for feedback to occur naturally; they figure if they're doing something wrong, they'll hear about it sooner or later. But as anyone who's been sideswiped during a job review by unexpected performance criticism can tell you, that's not always the case.

Keep in mind, however, that just asking for feedback is not enough. Or as Wagner puts it: General questions — such as “How did I do?” — will typically lead to general answers. The key is to ask your supervisor about specific areas of your performance, such as what you can do to communicate more effectively with your team, for example. In addition, don't ask for feedback from someone who you know is more likely to praise you than provide an honest assessment. The latter is much more likely to help you improve, no matter how much it might hurt initially, she says.

As for people who say they always ask for feedback, but never receive any, Wagner has her doubts. “I don't believe that,” she says. “If you're asking for feedback and not getting it, I'd be asking myself some harder questions ... about why people won't share tougher things with me.” Perhaps you need to build more trust — think about how the conversations you have play a role in discouraging honest feedback, she says.

2. Listen and learn.

Asking for feedback leaves you vulnerable to hearing things that may not match your own perceptions. As such, it's important to be prepared to hear some hard truths and not overreact. Instead, be open to exploring those issues in more depth with the feedback provider.

While you do so, Wagner says it's critical to remember that when people speak, they are generally confirming what they already know, but when they listen, they learn something new. So put on your listening hat and get ready to learn. That involves suspending any perceptions you have of yourself and keeping an open mind about what the feedback provider is trying to convey. Also think about what you could learn and what impact it might have on your performance or career, Wagner adds.

3. Remain curious.

This tip goes hand in hand with listen and learn. Too often, we're quick to dismiss things that don't fit our own perception. But instead of getting defensive, switch into what Wagner calls “curiosity mode.” Dig deeper into their perceptions of you and/or your performance. Ask the provider for information and examples that support his or her perception. It's OK to express surprise at a provider's comments, as long as you keep probing for supporting information. And if the feedback truly is shocking to you, it's perfectly OK to ask the provider for some time to think about it and agree to talk in more detail later.

4. Be open minded.

“The beauty of getting feedback is you have a choice about what to do with it.”

It's important not to jump into defense mode if you hear something you don't agree with. While Wagner concedes that's easier said than done, she notes that if you truly want feedback, it's important to accept others' perception of you. Moreover, people who respond well to feedback are looked upon favorably and generally have higher emotional intelligence, she notes.

The beauty of getting feedback is you have a choice about what to do with it. In fact, you don't have to do anything at all in response to negative feedback, Wagner explains. “But you should understand that if you ask for feedback and do nothing, it's often worse than not asking for feedback at all...it looks like you're not taking it seriously,” she says.

Since changing behaviors is hard, it's also OK to work incrementally and make small changes over time, as opposed to trying to do everything the provider suggested all at once. “You can also decide to change only certain things — not everything the provider suggested,” Wagner says. “But either way, it's important to let the provider know what you're going to do.”

And if you're not going to do anything at all, it helps to sit down with the provider and explain why. It helps to build the relationship, Wagner says.

5. Say thank you.

In a nutshell, Wagner believes that greater respect leads to greater results. And part of being respectful means repeating those two magic words that most of us learned as children: Thank you. As already noted, it's not always easy for managers to provide candid feedback. And by providing you with powerful feedback, the provider is taking a risk by assuming a partnership role in your success.

“You can take it or leave it (the feedback),” Wagner says. “But your job is to always remain grateful for whatever you get. That paves the way for more meaningful feedback because trust has been built.” **HR**



Turkey Gun Optics

Try offering these three optics options to turkey hunters.

BY MARK CHESNUT

Given the quality of today's modern, specialized turkey shotguns, hunters can kill a gobbler at distances unheard of two or three decades back. In fact, these guns beg to be topped with some kind of optic for better aiming — another thing nearly unheard of three decades ago.

I remember more than 20 years ago mounting one of the first commercially available red-dot sights, an original Bushnell Holosight, on my old Remington 870 that I used for everything from upland birds to waterfowl to gobblers. Since the gun had no mechanism for mounting such an optic, I had to rely on an aftermarket solution that bolted to my gun's receiver, providing a rail on top for mounting the optic. I used that combination to bag a couple of



nice Oklahoma public-land gobblers that I likely wouldn't have killed had I not given the big, clunky sight a try in the turkey woods.

Fast forward to 2021, and most modern turkey shotguns are drilled and tapped for mounting optics. And even for older shotguns that

are not, solutions are still commercially available to provide a rail for optics mounting — so all turkey hunters are potential customers.

In truth, a turkey optic makes aiming easier and more precise, giving hunters a little edge, especially at longer distances. While magnified optics are used by some hunters, because of the limited range of shotguns, most use red-dot sights, which typically have no magnification.

Let's take a look at three top turkey red-dots that can help you bolster your bottom line.

AIMPOINT COMP5S

This little red-dot would make a great addition to any turkey shotgun — new or old. While I haven't had the chance to use it on a gobbler hunt, Aimpoint did send me one last year for another project. I mounted it on a Rise Armament Watchman carbine and ran the gun/optic combination in a 3-gun match and couldn't have been more pleased with both.

The Comp5s is a high-performance red-dot sight made by a company that cut its teeth on red-dots and knows how to make quality products. At 8.3 ounces, the red-dot doesn't add much weight to your turkey gun, but don't let the size fool you. It offers big performance in a number of ways.

The unit is mountable on any MIL-STD rail system or Picatinny rail. It operates on common AAA batteries and has a battery life of more than five years of continuous use on position 7 and more than 10 years of continuous use on positions 1 through 4.

The unit's 2-MOA dot is about perfect for turkey-hunting applications, making it easy to precisely aim at a gobbler from point-blank range out to about 50 or 60 yards. Realizing the red-dot might be mounted on big guns that kick hard, Aimpoint keyed the mount base into the body of the sight to absorb recoil.

Aimpoint red-dot sights are designed so they can be used with both eyes open, greatly enhancing situational awareness and target acquisition. And thanks to their optical design, the red dot follows the movement of the user's eye while remaining fixed on target, eliminating the need for centering.

The standard configuration of the Comp5s includes the sight, an LRP mount and a spacer that gives 39mm optical axis. The sight also comes equipped with flip-up lens covers, with the rear one being transparent. Put one of these little red-dots on your favorite turkey shotgun this spring and you will not be sorry.





LEUPOLD DELTAPPOINT PRO

While I haven't been fortunate enough to use this red-dot for turkey hunting, I have used it on a handgun, and it lived up to its billing as a top-quality reflex sight. Of course, with Leupold's reputation as a producer of top-quality optics, that wasn't any surprise.

Featuring a lightweight aluminum housing shrouded in rugged, spring-steel armor, the DeltaPoint Pro is the latest model in Leupold's successful DeltaPoint line. And, the little red-dot sight with 2.5-MOA reticle is designed to be faster than your reactions, which turkey hunters should appreciate, given the run-and-gun nature of their sport.

Regardless of what kind of turkey shotgun is used, the DP Pro can be installed using a cross-slot mount on a Picatinny, Weaver or other rail base. It even features an easy-access battery compartment on top for replacing the single CR2032 battery, and gives the unit click adjustment for more precision. And it's available in either black or FDE.

The DP Pro's absolute waterproof and fog proof integrity means it is ready to perform in the field under any and all conditions. And its ultra-lightweight design – it weighs a mere 1.9 ounces with the battery installed – means it adds very little to the weight of turkey hunters' favorite scatterguns. Equally cool, patented motion-sensor technology inside of the DP Pro discerns any movement of the sight and automatically activates the illumination, alleviating the need to turn it on and off while in the turkey woods.

Note that the DeltaPoint Pro isn't just a turkey red-dot. It also excels on rifles and pistols, giving retailers a wider range of potential customers who might be interested in this little optic. It's far from being a budget red-dot, but serious hunters and shooters who are familiar with Leupold's legendary performance likely won't mind paying the premium.

BUSHNELL TROPHY TRS-25

Bushnell's Trophy TRS-25 is truly a great little red-dot sight at a price that fits in most customers' budget. Don't let the low price fool you, though. It performs like a much higher-priced sight and can be a perfect solution for those turkey hunters wanting to use an optic and save some coin at the same time.

I've used the TRS-25 on both AR-style rifles and shotguns with great success on each. I had one on my first 3-gun rifle, and it never let me down in competition, despite its small price tag. I also shot a round of sporting clays with a TRS-25-equipped shotgun a few years back and found it to be quick and easy to get on target, even on fast-moving clays.

The TRS-25 is a compact, sturdy, reliable 3-MOA red-dot sight with unlimited eye relief for handguns and shotguns. Its construction features O-ring sealed optics that stay dry inside, even when totally immersed in water, so it can definitely handle a wet, nasty day in the turkey woods. Also, nitrogen inside the scope ensures interior optical surfaces won't fog due to humidity or rapid temperature change.

Plus, the TRS-25 is built with shockproof construction for those who tend to be a little rough on their equipment. The unit is built to withstand bumps, bangs, drops and the rough-and-tumble environment of the turkey woods without the user having to worry about damaging the little red-dot. Brightness settings range from 1 to 11, and one CR2032 battery will run the unit for 3,000 hours on medium settings.

At just 4 ounces and only 2.5 inches long, this little sight doesn't add to your load in the woods. Plus, it easily mounts to any Picatinny-style rail with its integrated mounting hardware. For your budget-conscious shoppers interested in getting an optic for their turkey shotgun, this is one you'll want them to take a close look at.



“These guns beg to be topped with some kind of optic for better aiming — another thing nearly unheard of three decades ago.”

WRAPPING IT UP

For turkey hunters looking to be a little more accurate this year, a good red-dot can help get the job done, and many can do so without breaking the bank. For customers buying a turkey shotgun, a good optic is a definite add-on purchase that they should be encouraged to explore.

Also, this can be an especially good product for older turkey hunters whose aging eyes have a hard time picking up their front sight and a turkey's head 30 or 40 yards away. A good red-dot can add years to a hunter's successful gobbler-chasing career, and what's not to like about that? **HR**





Spur Sales by Strutting Your Decoy Stuff

Here are 10 great turkey decoys to lure customers in.

BY KEVIN REESE

From coast to coast, America's full spectrum of deer hunting is in the rearview mirror and countless hunters in every state have endured what some might refer to as the Dark Winter — that period of time between the end of deer season and the start of turkey season. The good news? That long wait your customers endure year after year is coming to a close. It's



worth stating the obvious here: The only constant is change. Rotating your inventory to meet the demands of differing hunting seasons and the hunters who enjoy them is a major ingredient to retail success. That said, with turkey season upon us, consider this roundup of 10 great turkey hunting decoy ideas to get customers strutting through your door.

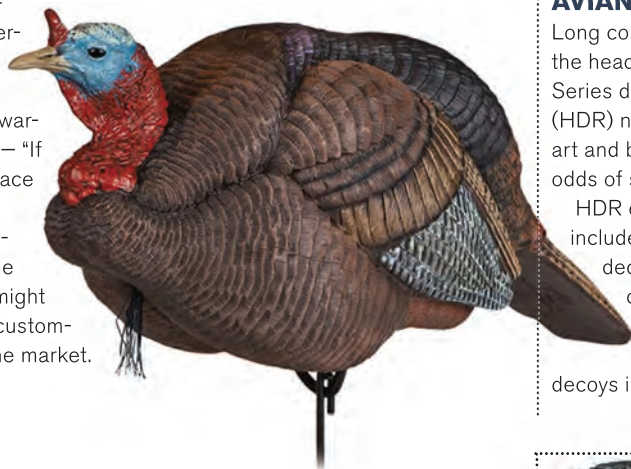


DAKOTA DECOY COMPANY XTREME FLOCKED BACK JAKE

Bill Willroth was no stranger to hunting when he founded Dakota Decoy Company in 2007. As a young boy, he hunted a leg of the Missouri River in south-eastern South Dakota, and his passion for outdoor pursuits has never waned. In fact, that passion has been channeled into his best decoy offering yet: the Xtreme Flocked Back Jake.

Carved by world champion carver Dave Constantine, the Dakota Decoy's Flocked Back Jake decoy shows off painstaking attention to detail and purported industry-best paint retention. Unlike any other decoy on the market, the Flocked Back Jake shows off some attitude with a head posture tilted and slightly back. Dakota Decoys promises, "It will change turkey hunting forever." The Flocked Back Jake and all other Xtreme Series decoys also boast "virtually indestructible" EVA plastic-blend construction with internal stake storage, a metal ground stake, and the most comprehensive paint warranty in the decoy industry — "If it falls or flakes off, we replace it." Considering construction, details and Dakota Decoy Company's warranty, the Xtreme Flocked Jake just might be the best bang-for-your-customers'-buck decoy value on the market.

www.dakotadecoy.com



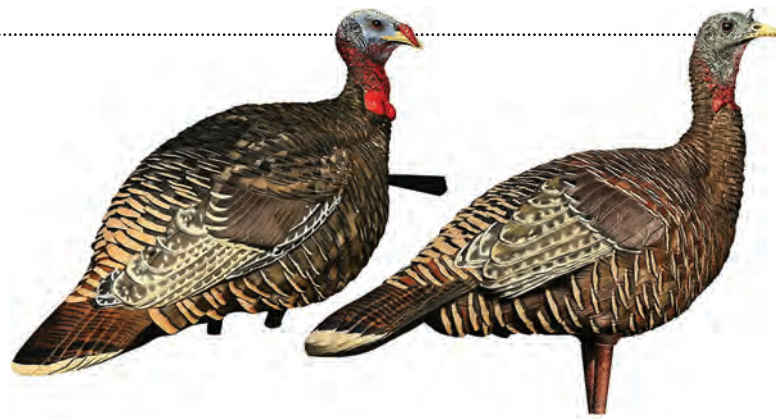
FLEXTONE THUNDER CREEPER

Flexitone has come a long way since the iconic Thunder Chicken hit our spring turkey season over a decade ago. It was a leading decoy at the time, and I have personally laid a number of toms to rest under

its commanding presence. Still, the only constant is change, and decoys have improved. Case in point: Flexitone's Thunder Creeper.

Fans of Flexitone's Thunder Chicken, Thunder Chick and other decoys are sure to flock to retailers looking for the Thunder Creeper, a half-shell designed strutting tom decoy slightly scaled down to increase potential of drawing in the real thing. The Thunder Creeper features a richly detailed, molded body; brilliant, ultra-realistic paint scheme; installed carbon ground stake and a folding fan; however, hunters can also use real turkey fans.

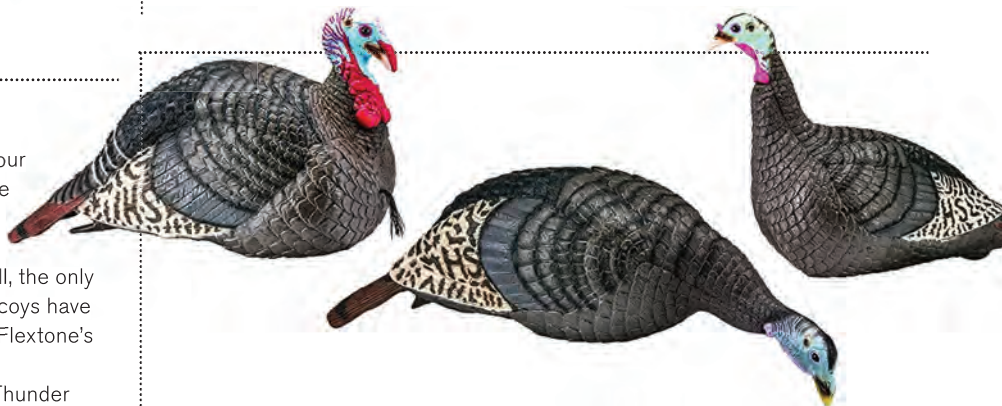
www.flextonegamecalls.com



AVIAN-X HDR JAKE AND HEN DECOYS

Long considered a favorite among turkey hunters, Avian-X decoys have turned the heads of hunters and turkeys alike for years, and the latest, greatest HDR Series decoys might be the company's best yet. True to their heavy-duty-realism (HDR) name, Avian-X decoys are based on meticulously hand-carved works of art and blow-molded into rugged durability designed to leverage your customers' odds of success year after year.

HDR decoys are available in quarter-to jake and hen designs. Jake decoys include two heads to depict aggressive and submissive postures, while the hen decoy depicts a more submissive posture. Hunters can use jake and hen decoys independently or together on stakes, or position a hen decoy low and directly in front of a jake decoy to depict a preparing-to-mate situation — positioning sure to fire up any aggressive tom. Avian-X HDR decoys include a carbon ground stake and carrying bag. www.avian-x.com



HUNTER SPECIALTIES STRUT-LITE FLOCK DECOYS

Founded in 1977, Hunter Specialties planted seeds in the camouflage tape business and soon after came out with face paint and calls. Fast-forward to a decade ago, and Hunter Specialties partnered with Delta Decoys to produce high-quality decoys at blue-collar price points. Since then, Hunter Specialties, under H.S. Strut branding, has become a leader in turkey decoy production, and their latest Strut-Lite series, most abundantly demonstrated in the Flock Decoys, is a culmination of years of innovating.

H.S. Strut Strut-Lite Flock Decoys are a combination of jake and hen posturing in pursuit, feeding and submission positions; of course, all of these actions are sure to catch the eye of a tom that simply can't stand to watch a young jake move in on his hens. The Flock Decoys set consists of a ready-to-be-bred hen, feeding hen and a young, semi-aggressive jake. Strut-Lite Flock decoys are lightweight and collapsible for easy carry and include two-piece ground stakes as well as full-size, richly-detailed bodies finished with flake-resistant paint. Perhaps the best news for your customers is the Strut-Lite Flock's versatility. Decoys in the set can be used to represent a flock or independently.

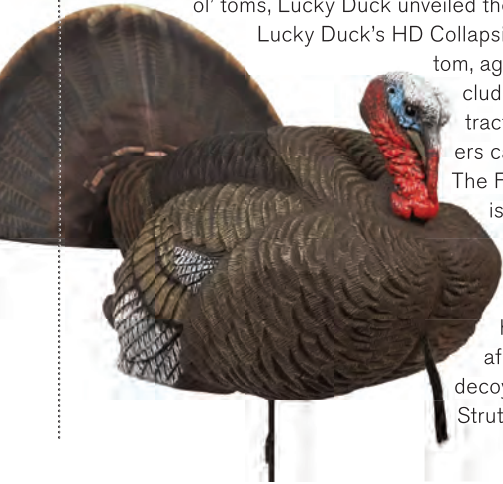
www.hsstrut.com



LUCKY DUCK HD COLLAPSIBLE FIELD STRUTTER

With a quarter-century under Lucky Duck Decoys' belt, the company has demonstrated masterful waterfowl deception, and a few years ago it added the art of fooling boss toms to its resume. Lucky Duck's reputation for premium waterfowl decoys has certainly spread to the turkey woods. The affordable HD Collapsible lineup has been a popular choice. In 2019, much to the dismay of wise ol' toms, Lucky Duck unveiled the Field Strutter.

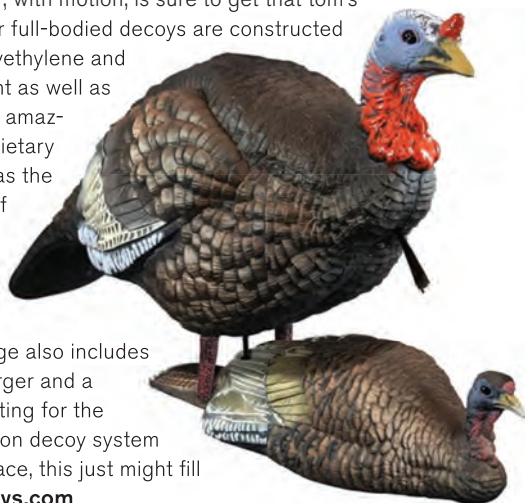
Lucky Duck's HD Collapsible Field Strutter is a younger tom, aggressively postured, with an included full-fan spread designed to attract dominant toms; of course, hunters can also choose to use a real fan. The Field Strutter's richly detailed body is constructed of 100-percent EVA plastic for years of ultra-light, collapsible carry and storage and years of reliable use. Value-hungry customers hunting for an affordable, premium-performance decoy are sure to flock in for the Field Strutter. www.luckyduck.com



HIGDON XS TRUEBREEDER MOTION TURKEY BREEDING PAIR

With the introduction of the world's first motion goose decoy in 1994, Mark Higdon changed the decoying industry for the better — innovation, technology and game-changing features crawled out of the industry woodwork to compete. It's been a family business for over 25 years, and John and Ben Higdon took the reins and ran until August 2020, when they teamed with Vertical Brands. This is sure to be a win for retailers, although Higdon's dealer list already tops 1,000 worldwide. Of course, while Higdon is best known for duck and goose decoys, the brand's turkey decoys, most notably the new XS TrueBreeder Motion Turkey Breeding Pair, are worth your shelf space.

The XS TrueBreeder Motion Turkey Breeding Pair is the pinnacle of Higdon's turkey decoy line. Veteran turkey hunters agree that one of the most effective decoy setups in our arsenal is a jake-hen mating pair — toms simply cannot tolerate a young jake winning over a hen. Mating decoys have been known to draw aggressive toms from long distances and Higdon's new XS TrueBreeder Breeding Pair, with motion, is sure to get that tom's blood boiling. True Breeder full-bodied decoys are constructed of durable, lightweight polyethylene and feature flake-resistant paint as well as XHD Hyper Feathering for amazing realism. Higdon's proprietary TruMotion sets the scene as the jake works to balance itself atop the submissive hen. Motion is powered by a lithium ion battery and activated by an included remote control. The package also includes carrying bags, battery charger and a ground stake. If you're hunting for the best battery-powered motion decoy system out there for your retail space, this just might fill the bill. www.higdondecoys.com



MOJO OUTDOORS SCOOT-N-SHOOT

MOJO Outdoors, creator of the iconic MOJO Mallard Motion Decoy, continues to advance innovation into turkey hunting. In years past, MOJO has helped turkey hunters improve stalking success with shotgun-mounted Fatal Fan and Tail Chaser Max decoys. MOJO's latest offering, the Scoot-N-Shoot, is designed to get your turkey-reaping customers closer to those boss toms than ever before.

While the Scoot-N-Shoot is designed for an aggressive turkey-reaping strategy, it also works well as a stationary decoy. Of course, for reaping purposes, the Scoot-N-Shoot is a larger decoy system specifically designed to hide your body as you stalk. The Scoot-N-Shoot includes a built-in handle and stake, artificial fan and a hub to accommodate a real turkey fan. www.mojooutdoors.com



FLAMBEAU KING STRUTTER

Flambeau opened its Bruce, Wisconsin, doors in 1947, and by 1948, the company introduced fishing's iconic Halik Frog. By 1977, Flambeau opened its hunting and fishing division, and over the next 40 years, the combination of decoys, lures and cases became a hinge-pin of Flambeau success. In 2006, the company acquired a number of brands and expanded product offerings in numerous hunting and shooting niches, including turkey decoys. While Flambeau became a major turkey decoy player more than a decade ago, the company hit a homerun in 2018 with the King Strutter.

The King Strutter is a full-size tom decoy with a keyhole design for the ground stake that allows for static display as well as 60-degree swinging motion in a breeze, as you might expect to see from a real tom. The King Strutter's undeniable realism is the result of world-champion master carver Dave Constantine's amazing work. Flambeau's mastery of molded plastics and a flake-resistant paint, coupled with truly impressive feather-by-feather detailing, pits the King Strutter against the industry's top-tier decoys, but at an affordable price point your customers are sure to appreciate. The King Strutter's posture is aggressive and in full-strut and includes a realistic fan; however, the decoy also accommodates a real fan for even greater realism. The King Strutter includes a wind-secure fan attachment point, forewing attachment grommets, internal carrying handle, powder-coated steel ground stake and a carry bag. www.flambeauoutdoors.com



DAVE SMITH DECOYS MATING MOTION PAIR

Dave Smith, co-owner of American-made Dave Smith Decoys, has long been heralded as a master sculptor, and proof of his world-class talent is evident in every decoy DSD sends to the long lines of discriminating hunters. Dave Smith Decoys remains the only decoy manufacturer utilizing A.C.E. 2.0 technology to craft full-size decoy bodies. A.C.E. material is incredibly durable and ultra-light-weight. It allows paint to bond exceptionally well and is self-healing — it takes a shotgun blast with minimal damage. While DSD is a leader in premium decoys, the company also has innovated hand-motion decoy action — case in point, the Dave Smith Decoys Mating Motion Pair.

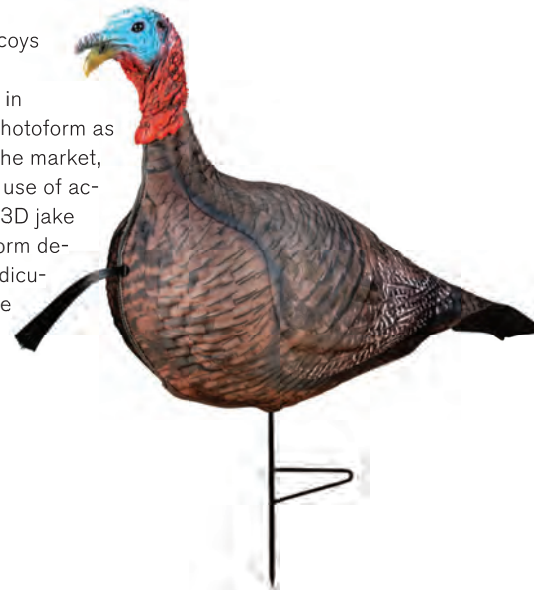
Like all other Dave Smith decoys, the Mating Motion Pair is the product of A.C.E. technology, so light weight, rugged reliability and paint retention are underscored. The Mating Motion Pair includes a breeding-ready hen and jake, ground stake, carrying bags and the motion-activating cable. Simple tugs give the decoy set the appearance of breeding preparation and mimick a jake trying to balance on the back of a hen. As a personal side note here, decoys representing a jake breeding a hen have been the most effective setups for most of my turkey-hunting adventures. Your customers are about to up their turkey-hunting game! www.davesmithdecoys.com



PRIMOS PHOTOFORM TURKEY DECOYS

Rounding out this collection of turkey decoys well worth considering for your retail inventory and sure to lure more turkey hunting customers into your store is Primos' line of Photoform turkey decoys. Primos is no stranger to turkey hunting. From box, slate and mouth calls to ground blinds and an array of decoys, Primos has a lot to offer retailers, and countless hunters have hit the turkey woods with Primos products.

Primos' new Photoform decoys are sure to add to the brand's reputation of leveraging odds in hunters' favor. Primos touts Photoform as the most realistic decoys on the market, largely due to the proprietary use of actual turkey photos printed on 3D jake and hen molds. While Photoform decoys are full-sized, they are ridiculously lightweight and collapse to respectably compact size for easy packing and carrying. www.primos.com



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Gremlins in Really Good Glass?

Pay for the best and set your mind at rest — but do customers really get what they pay for in optics?

By Wayne van Zwoll

The most expensive riflescopes marketed to hunters now list for over \$4,000, about 10 percent of the cost of a mid-level automobile. In 1926, a 4x Zeiss Zeilvler scope cost \$45, or 13 percent as much as Ford's Model T Runabout. Improvements in scopes and cars are easy to take for granted or to forget during sticker shock.

Optical sights help us aim, but they can only enhance what light shows us. We don't see a deer; we see light reflected from the deer — or, in silhouette, light behind it.

In basic form, glass is a melt of silicon dioxide (quartz) with calcium and certain alkali. The first optical glass to bend and focus light as well as to pass it arrived around 1884. Credit the Glastechnisches Lab in Jena, Austria, (to become Schott Glaswerke). Dow Jones was then publishing its first stock index and John Harvey Kellogg was earning a patent for “flaked cereal.” Just eight years earlier, George Custer had paid dearly on the Little Bighorn, and William Butler Hickok was shot in the back of the head by Jack McCall at a Deadwood card table.

While crude riflescopes date to the 1850s, receiver-mounted optics came much later. Zeiss had a “prism” scope around 1904, soon after the J. Stevens Tool Co.

cataloged riflescopes in the U.S. By Wall Street's 1929 collapse, Zeiss had acquired Hensoldt and was listing 1-4X and 1-6X variables. The Depression seemed to spawn scope makers stateside. In 1930, Bill Weaver, just 24, challenged the high cost of scopes with his \$19, 3/4-inch Model 330. It had internal adjustments: 1-minute windage, 2-minute elevation.

During the next couple of decades, customers paid little for huge improvements in image quality and in scope durability, reticles and adjustments. It was a golden era, sparked by the Zeiss discovery that magnesium fluoride coating cut the 4-percent light loss to reflection and refraction at air-glass surfaces.

Fog-free scopes came in 1949, when Leupold & Stevens sealed nitrogen in scope tubes. Until the 1950s, W/E adjustment moved the reticle in the field. So engineers put an erector pivot at the rear, where the reticle was. In 1962, a year after Leupold announced its Vari-X 3-9X, Lyman began installing Perma-Center reticles in its All American scopes.

During this time, scope tubes grew in diameter from 3/4- to 7/8- to a standard 1-inch stateside. But European and some U.S. makers produced 26mm tubes (bigger than the 25.4mm 1-inch). Steel gave way





to lighter alloy. Still, prices lagged. A post-war Zeiss cost just \$11 more than its Depression-era forebear; a 4X Unertl in 1950 brought \$2 less than a 4X Noske in '39! A decade later, I ogled the market's best rifle-scopes at prices of \$39 to \$59. As a new Chevy Impala listed for about \$2,600 in 1960, a scope cost about 2 percent as much as a car.

Refinements since, with inflation,

the target into focus. Dial rotation indicators prevent full-rotation error. Illuminated reticles feature multiple brightness settings and automatic shut-off. Trajectory-matched elevation dials cut and scribed for specific loads let you "dial the distance." (Lasering the target at 600 yards, dial to "6" and hold center.) Increasingly, scopes sell with a buyer-specified TMD dial.



← CNC machining of scope tubes from thick-walled tubing ensures strength and holds tight tolerances.

have hiked scope prices. One-piece tubes, CNC-machined from thick-walled tubing, are sturdier and leak-proof. Heavy horsehair reticles that broke in recoil acceded to Leupold's Duplex, .0012 platinum wire flattened to .0004 near the center. Meopta's etched reticle results from UV light striking a template that exposes all but the reticle on photo-sensitized glass. Magnesium fluoride has been replaced by multiple compounds in lens coatings that enhance brightness across several wavelengths. Every worthwhile scope is now "fully multi-coated" (all air-glass surfaces). Meopta applies 13 coatings. On exterior lenses, Zeiss LotuTec sheds water for clear aim in rain or snow. Bushnell's Exo Barrier also repels oil and nixes breath-fogging. Leupold's Diamondcoat resists scratching.

Scope interiors are more durable, and W/E adjustments are crisp, repeatable and more precise. A turret dial corrects for parallax (apparent target shift behind the reticle when your eye isn't aligned with the scope's axis), while bringing

Range-finding reticles went digital in 2018, when Sig Electro Optics announced its BDX system. The shooter transfers ballistic data from a smart-phone app to a BDX Kilo laser rangefinder, then "bonds" a BDX rifle scope to that rangefinder. Ranging a target with the Kilo illuminates a dot in the scope for a center hit with dead-on aim. As there's no laser in the scope, BDX is legal for hunting in all states. Other companies are following Sig's lead, recently Swarovski with its programmable, bluetooth-friendly dS.

Those are features. Has glass gotten better? Yes. But while many shooters think of glass quality and source, scope makers point out proliferation of glass types and applications, plus strict specifications and close tolerances in lens grinding and polishing. These — with attendant research, testing and patents — contribute most to improved performance. Swarovski, for example, buys "about 100 types of task-specific glass." Prism flatness is held to 1/100,000 mm, light angles to 1½ seconds. This Austrian firm



holds such close tolerances that many are gauged by lasers. Other top-end optics makers have similar standards. Finished Zeiss lenses are so closely matched that they “stick” by vacuum pressure when joined by hand.

Some years ago, Dr. Walter Mergen of Zeiss told me that engineers test not only for the action of glass on light, but also for other lens properties. “We measure elasticity, thermal expansion and conductivity, stain and moisture resistance, the effects of acids. Moisture alone can draw



↑ Dave Bushnell imported scopes in the '60s. Bushnell scopes like this still offer affordable quality.

alkali ions, forming a solution that erodes the silica gel layer of the polished surface.” Glass hardness is gauged by pressing a diamond point into the surface. Measuring the cavity yields “Knoop hardness” in kiloponds per square millimeter. Abrasion resistance is gauged by putting a grinder to the lens under controlled pressure for a set time.

Lens surfaces can be spherical or aspherical (the center curvature differing from the periphery’s). “Aspherical internal lenses can yield sharper resolution, a flatter, even a wider field than spherical,” said B&L’s Bill Cross. “In some scopes, these lenses are plastic, which can be molded to shape inexpensively.” Forrest Babcock at Leupold told me costly lenses are typically designed for use inside, where lenses are small and protected. “A big objective lens can account for a quarter of the manufacturing cost of a scope,” he said.

Babcock explained ED glass: “Extra-low-dispersion glass is often joined with a doublet to form a triplet or apochromatic lens. It corrects for overlap of light rays joined by the second lens in an achromat.” A couple of decades ago, a 6-inch blank of ED glass cost about \$5,000, or 170 to 200 times as much as a blank of ordinary optical glass. In a big objective, it bumps scope price considerably.

A lot of money goes into the machinery, software and skilled labor needed to produce riflescopes. In its lens production and fitting section, Meopta

employs 900 people. Forty coating machines include eight Syrus units worth 1.2 million Euros each! Beyond the glass and myriad other components, manufacturers must “spec” abrasives, bonding agents and coatings, as well as processes. Quality control adds even more overhead.

Even entry-level scopes must reflect well on a brand, as they affect the reputation of all its optics. Once, on an unexpected hunt far from home, I bought a \$99 Leupold at a Walmart and put it on a Marlin lever rifle. The image was bright, sharp and color-true. From the bonnet of a pickup, that rifle and its basic 3-9x40 sent three Hornady bullets into a 3/4-inch group.

As in automobiles, you can pay a great deal for brand, size, power and luxury features in scopes. German and Austrian optics — Zeiss, Swarovski, Leica — have a sterling reputation, and the companies charge for it. But such hallowed brands import parts, even scopes to flesh out their affordable lines. Some glass for elite Teutonic names hails from the Far East. “It must, of course, meet strict specifications,” Europeans assure me. And they do. Remember when Japanese autos got a dismissive sniff? What do you think of

Toyota now?

Brightness (light transmission) and resolution (detail sharpness) are common measures of optical quality. But in popular text, resolution seldom gets a number. Whether you’re selling or



← This modern target turret has illumination and focus/parallax dials, as well as windage/elevation adjustments in mils.

shopping scopes, an eye chart such as your optometrist uses can help you compare resolution. Light transmission numbers are tossed about as irresponsibly as COVID infection rates. How do writers know a scope that claims to pass 95 percent of incident light isn’t delivering 91? They don’t. Over Bavarian amber, one optical engineer assured me 90 percent transmission in scopes and binoculars is very good, and 94 percent is stellar.

Scope tubes of great girth and weight top current price lists.

A Swarovski dS 5-25x52



← Leupold’s specialized Mark 8 3.5-25x56 offers precision – a terrific power range in a sleek package.



→ Where legal, blackpowder rifles now wear scopes afield, to tap the reach of PowerBelt bullets.

weighs 38 ounces with a 40mm tube. A 34mm Vortex Razor HD 4.5-27x56 weighs 48 ounces. But while optically superb and loaded with features, they can make a rifle burdensome and awkward. They require high and expensive rings. Though they're popular with long-range shooters, they're ill-suited to hunting rifles.

“Scope tubes of great girth and weight top current price lists. A Swarovski dS 5-25x52 weighs 38 ounces with a 40mm tube. A 34mm Vortex Razor HD 4.5-27x56 weighs 48 ounces.”

“My clients include people with too much money,” said a pal whose custom rifles are among the loveliest objects ever wrought of steel and walnut. “They hunt Africa as breezily as we fetch milk from the grocer. They’re accustomed to having the biggest and best, so they order the most powerful rifles, the most expensive scopes. A 30-ounce optic that runs to 20X makes no sense on a dangerous-game gun, even a



← Trajectory-matched dials like this GreyBull enable shooters to dial to the distance and hold center.



30mm scope with six-times range. Other firms offer five-, six- even eight-times magnification. In a rare fit of retro brilliance, Swarovski's Z6 sired the 1-inch Z5. A 3.5-18x44 Z5 weighs less than a pound!

“Wide power ranges aren't free,” cautions Mark Thomas. After a decade at Leupold, he

founded Kruger Optical in Sisters, Oregon, where he and his staff design scopes. “To broaden a power range, you may have to add lenses to correct aberrations. More weight, higher cost, a longer erector assembly.”

Leupold engineers Lance Scrivens and Rick Regan agree. “At five- and six-times magnification,” says Scrivens, “low-power vignetting increases. Maintaining focus and keeping parallax at bay become difficult. Adding lenses and aspherical glass hike expense. When broad-range scopes appeared, following Albert Fideler's work at Swarovski, their high prices limited sales.”

.300. The inertia of that scope pulls it free of rings in sharp recoil. The rifle handles like a jackhammer.”

My first riflescope was a 2 1/2X that, had I not foolishly sold it, would have accounted handily for just about all the game I've shot with scoped rifles since. But most hunters seem enamored of power — and the instant choice of power. While 3-9x40 variables of the '60s were truly versatile sights, they were soon eclipsed at market by stronger glass. Then magnification ranges grew. The three-times range of the 3-9X (top power three times the bottom) gave way to four-times (3-12X). In 2007, Swarovski introduced its Z6, a

The Real Gremlins

Given their complexity, modern riflescopes are remarkably reliable. More troublesome: screws. Loose screws joining mount base to rifle and base to rings must be tight, screws clamping rings around the scope snug. A torque wrench helps you get the right tension. When attaching a mount base to a rifle, I cinch 6-48 screws to 25 inch/pounds. Leupold specifies 28 inch/pounds for 8-40s.

Tightening 1-inch rings to bases, Weaver specs 30 inch/pounds for the cross-bolt, same as Talley does for the bottom screw on its vertically split rings. Caps and the top screw on Talleys get no more than 20 inch/pounds. Cinch these like lug nuts on a wheel: alternately and, if four-screw, diagonally. Prevent scope damage by keeping rings 1/8-inch from turret and tube junctures.

Shooters once deliberately rusted screws in place with iodine. The more civilized option: Loctite Threadlocker, an anaerobic adhesive by Henkel Corp. The Blue version permits screw removal without heating. Red is stronger and requires heat. Loctite products cure in 24 hours.



“Tolerances are tighter than for traditional scopes,” explains Regan. “Figure plus or minus half a thousandth for erector cams. Lenses in a six-times scope travel about twice as far as in three-times sights, so dimensional variation in components has twice the effect.” He concedes new models are the life-blood of any industry. Whether shooters actually need heavy scopes with wide power ranges is a moot point, as long as they buy. Some scopes package impressive power

↓ This Swarovski X5i shows the sophistication that raises prices. No one can make this scope cheaply!



and range in sleek tubes. I’ve used Swarovski’s Z8i 3.5-28x50 on targets to 1,000 yards. It’s a marvelous sight, not as heavy or bulky as the description suggests.

The trend to big objective glass trails the rush to power, prying magnification ranges wider. Front lens size affects exit pupil, the diameter of the light shaft reaching your eye. (EP = lens diameter in mm/magnification). At 6X, a scope with a 42mm objective lens has a 7mm EP, roughly your eye’s maximum dilation at night. Even at 12X, that scope has all the light your restricted pupil can use at noon. Reducing magnification increases EP without the bulk and expense of big glass.

The fast-focus eyepiece is becoming standard on scopes. But like a set of car tires, you don’t need to rotate an eyepiece fast or often. It focuses the reticle to your eye. Reset it when age changes your vision.

Reticles in scopes for U.S. markets have traditionally been placed at the second (rear) focal plane, so they appear one size across power ranges. Front-plane reticles, popular in Europe, “grow” and “shrink” with power shifts. Hard to see at the low magnification you want for shots in cover, first-plane crosswires bulk up at high power, hiding small, distant targets. On the other hand, because they stay one size relative to the target, first-plane reticles make for fast ranging at any setting. Illuminated reticles can speed aim in dark or “busy” cover, but they add considerable cost.

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↑ How do you value a scope that helps you hit when you must, to make a lethal hit late on a safari's last day?

The selection of riflescopes and brand rivalry have increased with outsourced production in Asia. High-quality optics from Japan and the Philippines offer great value. The best buys lie in the fiercely competitive mid-price range, especially in popular offerings like 3-9x40s. At a Cabela's store last year, I counted nearly 200 scopes on display. Only 13 were priced higher than \$1,000. "Great optics," said the clerk, nodding to that cluster of blue-bloods. "But their rent is overdue."

If you recall the Eisenhower administration, you might say refinements beyond fully multi-coated lenses, fog-proofing and centered reticles amount to a lot of gingerbread. The most sophisticated scopes retail for 100 times the price of my first scope. Are they that much better? No. But lamenting the dearth of fixed-power scopes at prices of the '60s won't bring either back. Besides, scopes are now brighter, more reliable and more versatile. They're better sights.

Gremlins in modern glass? There aren't any. If a scope helps win a match or take a recordbook animal on a costly hunt, it will remain a bargain in memory, whatever the price. Remind customers of that after you ask what they paid for their automobile.

For your part, bear in mind that Fords and Chevys, Toyotas and Subarus outsell Mercedes. **HR**

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Helping Your Customers Build Their **PERFECT TURKEY GUN**

The many bells and whistles available on modern turkey shotguns can make buyers uncertain. Help them cut through the confusion by determining which features fit their needs and hunting styles.

BY BRIAN LOVETT

Casual hunters who've yelped a gobbler to within 25 steps and shot it with a nondescript shotgun might scoff at the concept of a perfectly tailored turkey gun. Don't tell that to modern turkey specialists.

Today's gobbler geeks crave specialized shotgun features and aftermarket tweaks that stretch far beyond the realm of typical gun selection. They'll talk endlessly about choke constrictions, pattern densities, optics performance and other esoteric considerations. But sifting through myriad performance and upgrade options can complicate the turkey-gun selection process, especially for newcomers to the sport.

Fitting customers with personalized turkey shotguns doesn't have to be difficult. Use these general guidelines to narrow the search and send folks to the spring woods with bona fide gobbler getters.

Gauge

Years ago, 12-gauges dominated the turkey hunting scene. Nowadays, thanks to heavier-than-lead ammo options (see the sidebar), subgauges have become viable turkey killers. With the correct shotshells and chokes, 20s, 28s and even .410s throw fantastic patterns with more than enough downrange energy for clean kills. Choosing a gauge often boils down to the heft of the gun and how much recoil a customer wants to endure.

The 12-gauges remain the top all-around choice, of course, because of their versatility and abundant ammo options. Further, a heavy 12-gauge load will still typically produce the thickest patterns simply because a 12-gauge shell holds more pellets than a subgauge load using the same shot size. The 20s offer lighter weight and reduced recoil, and 28s and .410s really reduce those factors.

The bottom line? Buyers should assess their physical

abilities and choose a gauge they will enjoy shooting at the range and in the woods. 28-gauges and .410s are ideal for youngsters, older hunters and even folks with slight builds. 20s can be great for active hunters who tote their shotguns on long cutt-and-run or open-country hunts. Ultimately, a customer must assess what they want to carry and how much felt recoil they're comfortable handling.

Caveat: With any gauge, customers must match their shotgun with a choke and load that will produce solid patterns at standard turkey-hunting ranges. That's especially true with the small subgauges. You cannot expect to cleanly kill a gobbler with a light lead 28-gauge or .410 load. Buyers should investigate TSS and other heavier-than-lead options, which produce great downrange energy but use smaller pellets — No. 9s in many cases — to produce thick, consistent patterns.

Action

As with gauge, this boils down to personal preference. Gas-operated semi-auto guns reduce recoil somewhat, and modern models are extremely reliable. Inertia- or recoil-operated repeaters provide unmatched reliability. Tried-and-true pump guns are always a good choice and cost less, though lighter models might increase felt recoil somewhat. Double-guns — typically over-and-unders — offer an interesting option, as customers can use relatively open chokes in one barrel for close birds but a tighter choke in the other tube for longer shots. And single-shots can be perfect for beginning hunters or folks who enjoy the simplicity and challenge of only having one shot. Customers should consider how many shells they'll want to load afield and the type of action with which they're proficient. In most cases, turkey hunting is a one-shot game, so the choice might rest on a customer's hunting style and fondness for a specific action.



Brand

With so many choices available, choosing a shotgun brand can be confusing. Most customers will have a price point in mind and are seeking the best gun for their money. Some will be loyal to specific brands and might pay a bit extra for a gun manufactured by that company. Whatever they're willing to spend, buyers should always keep quality and reliability in mind. A low price point does little good if a gun requires repairs or is inoperable after a few seasons.

Conversely, why pay top dollar for a Cadillac-level gun when a Ford-price-point model will perform just as well? It's a tricky equation, but always try to guide folks to solid-performing guns that will last them many seasons.

Also, consider whether the customer will use a gun solely for turkeys or also wing-shooting and target shooting. Many companies build turkey-specific guns with shorter barrels and rails or other optics-mounting options. Others offer good all-around models a buyer can use in the spring woods and the duck marsh.

Finish

Turkey guns should have some anti-reflective finish so sharp-eyed gobblers won't spot flash or glare. The choice often depends on price.

Baked-on camouflage finishes remain the standard for turkey guns, and it's easy to see why. They elimi-

nate glare, let the gun blend into the landscape and look cool. They also typically increase the gun's cost somewhat. Lower-cost options, such as black synthetic guns or Parkerizing, also eliminate flash, and guns with those finishes usually cost a bit less. Cerakoting — a light ceramic coating — provides another intriguing option. And in a pinch, customers on a budget can simply purchase a standard blued gun and wrap it in camouflage tape.

Optics

With the advent of ultra-tight chokes and high-performance shotshells, the days of using a simple bead on a turkey gun have passed. Directing a precise shotgun pattern is more akin to shooting a rifle, so turkey hunters rely on high-tech optics.

Customers have many options, from scopes to high-

visibility sights, but many favor modern red- or green-dot optics. Price points can vary widely, but a customer's choice should boil down to quality, longevity and reliability. They'll want a sight that's sturdy enough to withstand being dragged through brush and perhaps bumped. Likewise, battery life is critical, as they won't want to carry spare batteries afield in case of failure. Models with no parallax — that is, the target and reticle are on the same plane — and no or very light magnification are ideal. Further, models that let you adjust brightness pay dividends when hunting from the low light of dawn into bright midday sun.

That's a lot to consider, but ultimately, try to guide buyers toward models in their price range that will perform for years and have practical features.



↑ Most turkey hunters want a quality sling on their shotgun, as it makes long treks or all-day hunts far more comfortable.



↑ Aftermarket red-dot-style sights are great precision aiming tools. Price ranges vary, but customers typically seek durable models with a long battery life.

Choke

Want to scratch your head? Check out online or social media discussions about points of constriction in shotgun chokes and how many pellets a specific load and choke patterned in a gobbler's head and neck at 30 steps. The options can be mind-boggling. But don't just let customers fall into the trap of buying a choke simply labeled "extra-full" or "turkey choke." They need to at least consider the basics of constriction and find a choke that will put an acceptable number of pellets from a specific shotshell in the turkey hunting kill zone. (The old standard of 100 pellets in a 10-inch circle still applies, but with TSS and precision modern chokes, many shooters get far better performance.)

Popular aftermarket chokes usually have extremely tight constrictions, such as .655 for lead shot in 12-gauges or looser (about .675) for heavier-than-lead 12-gauge loads. Generally, tighter chokes perform best with smaller shot, such as No. 6 lead, and looser models perform better with larger shot, such as No. 4s. Heavier-than-lead shot often requires somewhat looser constrictions. Other factors play a role. A gun's bore (some 12-gauges have larger bores,





TOP AMMO OPTIONS

TSS SHOT: Unless you've lived in a country with no turkeys the past several years, you've likely heard about tungsten super shot. With a density of 18 grams per cubic centimeter, TSS is almost twice as dense as lead (11 grams per cubic centimeter) and is also denser than other tungsten-based nontoxics. The super-heavy pellets let shell-makers create pellet-packed loads of tiny shot that produce the same energy as much larger shot but considerably boost pattern density.

Several companies produce various TSS loads, including Federal, Browning, Apex, Hevi-Shot and Tungsten Super Slam Shot.

Federalpremium.com

Browningammo.com

Apexammunition.com

Hevishot.com

Tssshot.com

OTHER NONTOXICS: Hevi-Shot produces several other hard-hitting turkey loads, including Hevi-13, Magnum Blend, Hevi-X Strut and Hevi-Metal Turkey. *Hevishot.com*

Kent Cartridge offers TK7 Penetrator, which uses high-performance tungsten shot that's 38 percent denser than lead. *Kentcartridge.com*

LEAD SHOTSHELLS: Winchester's tried-and-true Longbeard XR shotshells use Shot-Lok technology to produce extra-tight patterns and long shot capability. *Winchester.com*

such as .745, instead of the standard .729 constriction, for example) can affect choke performance, as it changes the degree of constriction. Further, there are many subtleties involved with matching a specific gun, shell and choke into a high-performance team. Ideally, customers should test several chokes and loads with a gun to see which performs best. They want a combination that shoots thick, tight, consistent patterns at acceptable turkey hunting ranges.



Buyers will also have to choose between ported and non-ported chokes. Ported tubes typically reduce muzzle jump and separate the wad from the shot faster, which can improve patterns. They're also usually louder.

Aftermarket Upgrades

Slings are a must for turkey hunters, as you'll tote guns for miles sometimes. Many turkey-specific shotguns come with slings or at least swivels for attaching a sling. In other cases, a simple wrap-around-style sling can suffice. Whatever style they choose, buyers should seek a sling that fits snugly yet comfortably around their shoulder.

Also, customers shooting heavy loads in larger gauges might want reduced recoil, so recoil pads or more expensive recoil-reducing technology can be beneficial.

And for children or newbies, some type of shooting sticks or a bipod can help focus aim and eliminate the need to hold a shotgun steady at the moment of truth.

Conclusion

This season, when customers wander around the shotgun rack with confused looks on their faces, guide them to turkey-specific guns that are durable, perform well and are tailored to their hunting needs and styles. The process might be somewhat tricky, but the final result — a smiling buyer with a gobbler gun that lasts a lifetime — is more than worthwhile. **HR**

↑ Customers might get confused by the terminology involved with choke tubes, but the buying process doesn't have to be difficult. Basically, they'll want a tube that meshes well with their gun and specific loads to throw a tight, consistent pattern at reasonable turkey hunting ranges.





Game Planning for the GRUB GURUS

Here's how to sell budget-based customers what they need for effective food plots.

BY JOSH HONEYCUTT

Growing groceries for deer and other wildlife is no easy feat. It takes time, money, knowledge, and plenty of equipment. Fortunately, there are different methods for different budgets, and for shops whose clientele don't own John Deere tractors and monstrous no-till planters, it pays dividends to stock other items more suitable for them.

Identifying What Customers Need

Today, the average food plot costs approximately \$200-250 per acre, not including tractors, four-wheelers or expensive implements. That's just the fertilizer, lime, seed and other basic necessities.

In an age where virtually everyone is strapped for cash, many people can't afford the most expensive food plot equipment. Sure, you might make a big sale every now and then, but let's be honest — you won't beat larger retailers' prices anyway. So, let's focus on optimizing inventory for the bulk of those who walk through the doors.

Most DIY food plots are less than an acre, and the majority are around a quarter-acre in size. Generally, a quarter-acre food plot is about 20 to 30 yards by 40 to 50 yards, which smaller equip-

ment and hand tools can handle. Most hunters refer to these as micro plots or poor man's food plots. Use those terms when selling to customers.

Seeds to Stock

What someone plants depends entirely on several factors, such as geographical location, soil type, time of year and more. It's important to stock the right things for the region you're located in. Also, stock the right things for the time of year. Generally, with some exceptions, you won't plant the same things in the spring, summer and fall.

Beyond that, it might prove beneficial to stock plenty of perennials, because they don't have to be reseeded every year. Most hunters prefer these because they get more food plot for their money.

In this regard, clover is king, and being such small seeds makes germination easier, especially for those who put in budget plots.

These three-leaf, bit-sized morsels are perfect for most food plotters. It's a hardy plant that's relatively simple to keep alive. It requires some maintenance, but that's no reason to shy away. There are several good options within the clover family, though, including red, white, crimson and ladino. These are generally planted in the spring or frost-seeded in late winter. Once growing, clover is one of the most desirable plants on the landscape.

Brassicas are also popular options, such as turnips, radishes, canola and rapeseed. While beets are often falsely considered part of the bras-





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sica family, these are actually part of a different group. Still, all of these are excellent food plot options. Generally, these need 90 days to reach full maturity. Customers will need to time plantings with this in mind, location depending. Once established, these are excellent food sources, especially once weather turns cold. The first hard frost triggers a sudden increase in glucose, resulting in a sweeter-tasting plant.

Clovers and brassica species will likely create most of your sales, but there are other options, such as popular agricultural species. These include alfalfa, corn, grain sorghum, oats, soybeans, and wheat. Other legumes and oddball species that drive sales include buckwheat, cereal rye, chicory, cowpeas, lablab, sunflowers and winter peas. Of course, these are all very different plants with different requirements, but they're solid seeds to keep on shelves.

Fertilizer to Offer

Another pair of items to consider is fertilizer and lime. Of course, there are often regulations to follow when stocking and selling this, so do your homework. Once those boxes are checked, it's a hot-ticket product to consider.

Generally, soils inside of timber and thick cover are more acidic. Increasing the pH — to get close to that desired 6.5 mark — is necessary for healthy plants. The fact that most food plots are in such thick, remote locations translates to a need for fertilizer and lime.

Applications of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium will likely be needed to get the soil ready. A soil test determines exactly what combination of these three elements will put the ground in tip-top shape. But if hunters don't want to take that step, offering a standard option is the next-best thing. Often, 10-10-10, 12-12-12 or 13-13-13 will do in a pinch.

Tools to Inventory

As mentioned, soil tests are crucial for success. While many food plotters consider this an add-on and not all that necessary, they're wrong. Stock these and sell them as a critical component for success — because they are. While land managers can do soil tests through their local ag extension agency or via online services, manufacturers also provide soil tests, such as Antler King's Instant pH Soil Test Kit.

For those on a budget, certain items will serve them well. The first order of business is spraying (and killing) all unwanted vegetation. A backpack sprayer and budget-based herbicide will do just fine.

The next is a chainsaw or hand saw. Clearing ground for plots isn't easy, and removing trees,

5 Must-Stock Seed Blends

Whitetail Institute Imperial No-Plow

Some of the best places to plant food plots are located in areas where larger equipment can't reach. Fortunately, some companies have produced seed blends that grow well without breaking ground. Good seed-to-soil contact is still necessary, but turning it isn't required. Enter Whitetail Institute's Imperial No-Plow. It includes clovers, brassicas and more. This blend establishes quickly, works with little direct sunlight, and is very drought resistant.

whitetailinstitute.com

Backwoods Attraction Lazy Acre

Another blend labeled as a no-till option, it grows pretty well with minimal ground-work. Again, adequate seed-to-soil contact is needed, but it doesn't need to be worked traditionally like most plots. In this product, you'll get a mix of blackhawk arrow leaf clover, buck radish, crimson clover, trophy rape and ryegrass.

backwoodsattraction.com

Frigid Forage Big-N-Beasty

This is the company's No. 1 selling blend, and it's no secret why. It provides a hardy mix of kale and forage radishes, rapes, and turnips. It's a cost-effective way to feed deer and position them for shot opportunities, too. Overall, it's a great blend with lots of attractiveness and nutrition.

frigidforage.com

Killer Food Plots Carnage Brassicas

This blend consists of kale, rape, radishes and turnips. Its small seed size makes for increased seed-to-soil contact, and it works well even in sandy, rocky and clay soils. Still, it prefers well-drained ground and does best with at least 4 hours of direct sunlight.

killerfoodplots.com

Antler King Trophy Clover Mix

Another great clover mix option, Antler King's product offers numerous varieties, including four perennial clover species, chicory and rapeseed. This provides a 30% protein diet that deer need during the spring, summer and fall, which helps keep the herd in great shape. Plus, it's dynamite to hunt over, too.

antlerking.com



shrubs and other underbrush requires sharp teeth.

Knocking down weeds and grass can be done with tractors, bushhogs and other fancy equipment, but a riding mower, push mower or weed eater will do the trick, albeit more slowly.

As for exposing the soil, in timbered ground, a leaf blower might push aside most of the forest duff and leaf litter, but areas already receiving significant sunlight will have a thick, matted layer of vegetation. Here, a small ATV disc, garden tiller or yard rake is necessary.



Then it's time to put seed in the ground. Hand-crank and walk-behind seed sowers will likely be hot sellers, but I prefer the former. Walk-behind models are often clunky and more difficult to use in hard-to-reach places — not to mention how aggravating it is to push these things over and around root wads, tree stumps and other obstacles.

The Add-On Items

Once the primary products are in the shopping cart, consider tacking on a few other things. Plot boosters and soil conditioners, such as Antler King's Plot Max and Clover Fuel, are popular items among food plotters. These are generally great items to keep on hand.

Great food plot screen seed options are other things to remember. Deer feel more comfortable using plots if they're secluded, and hunters have better hunting experiences if deer can't see them coming. Screens solve both of these problems and can increase your bottom line, too. Solid plant species that serve this purpose include Egyptian wheat, little (or big) bluestem, miscanthus, prairie cordgrass, sorghum Sudan grass and switchgrass.

Choose your preferred variety based on what grows best near you.

Food plots aside, there is plenty of other gear hunters will likely purchase. After going to the trouble of planting these plots, they might just want a trail camera to monitor deer activity. Have batteries and SD cards in stock as well. Tree-stand and ground blind options are other add-ons. Where legal, minerals and bait can be solid sellers, too.

Read the Customer

It's all about determining where the customer's head is without them actually telling you. Ask them questions to gauge what direction they're going and what they need to get it done. Then, sell them what they need and no more. It's better to efficiently serve, impress and retain a customer than to cram a bunch of stuff down their throat and never see them again. Be a good retailer who drives sales, but be a good person first. **HR**

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2021 LINE REVIEW

TARGET



METTLE FIELD QUIVER
Black & Silver RH #1601108
Black & Silver LH #1601109



Mossy Oak Break-up Country® #1601215
Olive/Tan #1601238



Mathews Black #1601216

HUNT



Black & Silver RH #1601108
Black & Silver LH #1601109



Black #1601222



Black #1601198



UNIVERSAL TARGET/HUNT



Black #1601221



Olive #1601001



Surviving the Next Phase of COVID With 2021 Expansion

With COVID permanently changing the way people shop, there's never been a better time for your store to invest in e-commerce.

BY TONY ARNOLD

Whether you are a retailer or a manufacturer, the next phase of COVID will be more challenging than ever. For those in the sporting and firearms industry, we have been lucky to see record sales again, however, what businesses invest in with that extra profit could make or break your business this year. According to recent McKinsey and Total Retail business research articles, both noted that in this COVID economy, investment in infrastructure, strategy and potentially even acquisitions can have a dramatic change on the future health of your business. These are big strategic investments for a typical retailer to consider far beyond typical investments in extra inventory.

If we narrow the focus for retailers and manufacturers, the fastest investment impact with the highest immediate return is an advanced e-commerce system with analytics-driven sales, pricing and promotions, and marketing/sales productivity enhancements. A high-tier commerce solution can be a big investment, but accounting to recent data, 90% of all sales during the 2020 holiday season were via e-commerce, and that trend was expected to continue post-holiday. Add on that 40% of those sales were projected to be via mobile devices and the investment in a commerce solution that has out-of-the-box support for mobile users is a strong argument for the investment. E-commerce topped \$190 billion in 2020, with at least a 30% increase projected in 2021. With 40% of those purchases on mobile devices, it's surprising that most websites are not optimized for mobile-friendly e-commerce experiences out of the box. Most retailers will need to either opt for third-party add-on mobile support solutions to what they own or plan for a 2021 site replacement to support a mobile demand that is only growing. Not doing so is widely considered a huge strategic business misstep.

The good news is that current e-commerce solutions can



combine many of the above attributes within one investment. The result is one of the smartest strategic investments at a time when U.S. e-commerce is experiencing an all-time record increase due to the impacts of COVID. In the scope of big strategic moves, standing up a feature-rich e-commerce system can be accomplished in just a few months, but is a big business commitment. Those added capabilities will immediately put your business in a significantly stronger, more competitive and flexible position during an uncertain future for brick-and-mortar retailers.

The goal is to target a well-designed, merchandised website that can potentially connect to suppliers' inventories to provide a wider range of available inventory and fewer out-of-stock products, and ultimately capture more sales and increase revenue. Many distributors are providing packaged e-commerce solutions, however, these usually limit products to those offered by the distributor. Most distributors do provide integration options into almost any commercial e-commerce solution. E-commerce integrations with

↑ With 90% of all sales during the 2020 holiday season happening via e-commerce, you can't afford not to be selling online.



store systems and inventory increase fulfillment efficiency, sales analytics help you understand and react to trends, and price/promotion controls support inventory sales and old stock turns. Obviously these capabilities are not offered in starter e-commerce solutions, nor are they inexpensive,

This is kind of like being in a strip mall and customers having to fight for parking as a resource. As long as all the customers do not show up at once for all the businesses, this model works well. If all the stores have high traffic at the same time, customers are not going to find a park-



but a lot of sophistication can be wrapped into one investment for a retailer.

The cost of a top-tier e-commerce solution can easily reach 3% of revenue, which can be a sizable level of investment and potentially drive a foundational change in the way retailers have done business. Let's take a look some considerations for the modern commerce site.

The current trend for e-commerce is to leverage a hosted and managed e-commerce solution generally referred to as SaaS — Software as a Service (sometimes PaaS — Platform as a Service) where the vendor provides the support, hosting and management of the software platform and the business is left to only have to worry about the setup configuration, loading product, merchandising, sales and fulfillment. For all but the absolutely largest retailers, leveraging a hosted cloud-based SaaS e-commerce solution is clearly the best and least expensive option.

With hosted SaaS e-commerce solutions, companies have the opportunity to either choose multi-tenancy cloud or cloud native solutions. Generally, most commerce-in-a box solutions are multi-tenancy, meaning simply that you are potentially sharing an e-commerce server with one to several hundred other e-commerce retailers.

ing spot to shop, or in the case of the commerce server, they'll experience a really bad, slow or even no shopping experience.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of e-commerce solutions on the market are multi-tenancy based, hosted SaaS solutions, and this can lock in businesses to a cost model that may not be preferable long-term. Pricing for e-commerce solutions is offered a number of ways. The most common model is a packaged tiered or variable cost-per-month price based on variables like number of products, traffics, and/or gross sales. For larger, higher-volume retailers, this is generally a poor model, as costs scale linearly with a more-you-make-the-more-you-pay model. Another pricing option is based on the negotiated platform price, plus a requirement to leverage the vendor's payment processor, where they take a percentage. It's generally a better solution, but again, the costs scale. The last option is a negotiated platform cost plus management, service and support costs, and you have the option to use your own payment processors and hosting location. This last option is typically the lowest cost option long-term and offers the most flexibility, but businesses will need to decide whether they want to take on more of the system's management responsibility.

The current trend is for cloud native e-commerce solutions that allow businesses to have a vendor or integration partner manage the solution, but also allow them to host their e-commerce application on whichever cloud environment they want — typically Amazon, Google, Microsoft, etc. The cloud native model affords customers a lot more flexibility from an integration perspective, control of cost, and typically much lower cost.

Beyond evaluating commerce platforms, customers will also need to evaluate integration/configuration partners. Typically these partners will assist with the initial setup and implementation and usually integration to other systems within the business, such as order and inventory management and fulfillment. As a general rule, great care should be taken to choose an implementation partner that has deep experience with not just the commerce platform of choice, but also the systems you have that you plan to integrate with.

The first thing owners should calculate is the ROI on their current site as a baseline, which is $(\text{Profit} - \text{Investment}) / \text{Investment} \times 100$. If you have a \$1.5M site delivering \$500,000 in profit at an Investment/Cost of \$50,000, you have a 90% return on e-commerce investment. Businesses should use this as a baseline in targeting a new solution that could deliver more for the same price or preferably more capabilities for less investment.

Deciding that your current commerce site is not cutting it from a business perspective and deciding to look at other e-commerce solutions is a moment that causes most owners to take a big, deep breath. If you are reading this article, you likely have some limitation or issue with your commerce site, and this is a year for businesses to make the decision to take the 2020 profit and invest in an e-commerce system with more capabilities, features, functions and mobile user support. **HR**

About the Author

Tony Arnold is an awarded Chief Marketing Officer and marketing strategy thought leader with more than 20 years of database marketing experience in global Fortune-level corporations, including Sears, IBM and HP. He is currently the CMO of a marketing solutions software company. Over his career, Arnold was an *Inc Magazine* Web Strategy Award Winner, launched the second e-commerce site in history, developed the largest retail CRM system processing 25B customer contacts yearly, and has developed, created and managed database marketing systems that have generated approximately \$57B in revenue over his career.





Adapting to Millennials Will Be Key to Companies Growing

Don't believe the negative stereotypes you hear about the young generation of workers.

BY JUDY KNEISZEL

As the baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) retire in droves and Generation X (born between 1965 and the early 1980s) is solidly entrenched for the most part in jobs and careers, it is likely the next employee you'll hire will be a millennial. This group was born sometime between the early 1980s and 2000.

Not all members of a generation are alike, but understanding the general characteristics that define millennials can help you recruit and retain these "special snowflakes," as the millennials are

sometimes called because of what their elders perceive as a pampered upbringing.

No, it's not impossible to find loyal help among the almost 80 million millennials in the U.S.

Jason Dorsey, researcher at The Center for Generational Kinetics based in Austin, Texas, says millennials can become valuable, loyal and high-performing employees. "What's most interesting is that these high-value outcomes are not tied to compensation," Dorsey writes on his all-things-millennials website, www.jasondorsey.com.

Retention Is Key

Finding good millennial employees is just the beginning: Keeping millennials as employees is the bigger challenge. Millennials are the first generation to enter the workforce with no expectation of being employed their entire working lives by the same company. This attitude shift was caused more by economic changes than lack of desire.

They have seen enough of their generation's parents and older family members "downsized" from companies — after decades of loyalty — to ever expect a gold watch at age 65 from the

Photos: Bill Conway



“Millennials want fewer layers of management and fewer walls between management and nonmanagement.”

company that hired them at age 20. A joint survey of human resources professionals conducted by the research and consulting firm Millennials Branding and the job and career website Beyond reported that 45 percent of companies experience higher turnover with millennials than with older generations.

If your company is struggling to fill job openings and retain good young employees, here are some tips to help you land quality millennials and strategies for keeping them:

Provide a clear career path. Millennials are more likely to accept a position and stick with it if they can see room for advancement. Share success stories with them about employees who started at the bottom and moved into management positions. Also, show them the big picture of opportunity for success in the industry, perhaps by sharing your own story of how you built your business and now own multiple stores and have a large number of employees.

Answer their “why” questions with honesty and transparency. In many ways, this generation never outgrew the persistent asking of “why?” that started when they were 3 or 4 years old. They have no problem following rules if there’s a good reason for the rules. “Because we’ve always done it this way” is not an acceptable reason for anything to a typical millennial. They also appreciate financial transparency, accepting limits on expenditures when presented with facts about profit margins.

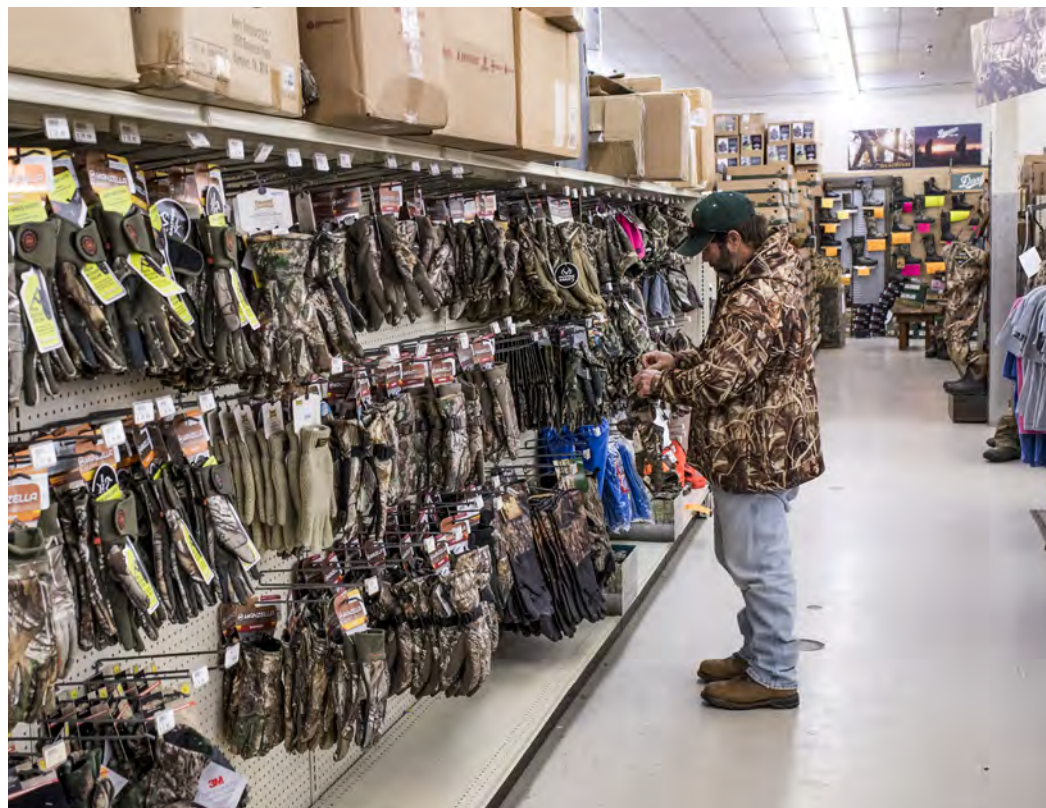
Tear down walls and rework the organizational chart. Millennials want fewer layers of management and fewer walls between management and nonmanagement. A “we’re all in this together” team attitude is more attractive.

Make mentorship a two-way street. Realize younger workers have knowledge to share with older workers, especially when it comes to technology.

Beef up your brand. Millennials grew up eating Happy Meals and wearing brand-name clothing from head to toe. They can be extremely brand loyal and will be impressed with a potential employer that does branding right.

Have a strong digital presence and up-to-date technology. A job candidate will Google your company before even scheduling an interview, and if all they find is an amateurish and aging website, they will definitely be turned off. Seeing

that a company uses up-to-date technology and is active on social media platforms is attractive to young employees. Someone who is skilled in using the latest accounting software will not want to work for someone who still fills out ledgers by



hand and uses an adding machine.

Appreciate them. Maybe it’s because of the cliché that they didn’t keep score and everyone got participation trophies in their youth soccer days, but many in this generation seem to need frequent validation. Appreciating an employee who goes above and beyond will enhance company loyalty.

Stress safety. Members of this generation were strapped into booster seats until they were practically driving age and wore bike helmets as a matter of course. Safety is second nature to them. They were fussed over as kids and expect high levels of protection on the job as adults, too. Seeing your workers in questionable safety situations or flagrantly breaking safety rules will be a real turnoff for this generation.

Brag about community involvement and en-

vironmental awareness. This generation wants to contribute to society. Many were required to perform community service in middle or high school, and the lesson stuck. They value volunteerism and charitable giving, and they want to be a part of a company that does, too.

Be more flexible. Millennials place a high value on a flexible work schedule. This might mean allowing office workers to work from home occasionally or scheduling shifts so workers can put in four 10-hour days and enjoy a three-day weekend. Maybe it means allowing a young dad time

off during the day to volunteer at his daughter’s preschool and letting him make up the time later in the week. In general, millennials think about work differently, but work just as hard as anyone if they feel respected.

Get to Work

Millennials are now the majority generation in the U.S. workforce. If you are from a different generation and want the company you built to endure, you’re probably going to have to adapt to their way of working. You may just find your company is better and stronger because of the changes they inspire. And if you are a hardworking millennial, there should be plenty of opportunity out there for you if you can be a little patient with those that came before you. **HR**



Sniffing Out Straw Purchases

If you sell firearms, you're obligated to do your best to identify straw purchasers. Here are some typical offenders.

BY DAVID REARICK

In retail firearms sales, sellers are all held to the same high standards. In addition to following federal and state guidelines, sellers shoulder the responsibility of making sure the sale is kosher, even in gray areas, to the best of their ability. While no seller wants to violate the law or put their business at risk, ensuring that straw purchases don't occur at their shop requires diligence, being able to read situations, and not being afraid to simply back away and say no. The examples below are meant to reveal some simple ways to sniff out straw purchases and offer some insight into how to handle the difficult decision of rejecting a sale.

Spousal Purchases

A husband and wife walk into the store and look over a variety of different deer rifles chambered in .300 Win. Mag. The husband is handling the firearm extensively, shouldering it, talking about the different features, and asking your opinion on the caliber. After looking over a few different choices, the conversa-

tion shifts to optics and then rings and bases. At this point, it is fairly clear that the husband is buying it for himself, as the wife has barely said a peep, only remarking once about how she prefers the feel of her .270. After the final selections are completed, you move toward the counter, smiling about how easy the sale has gone. After laying everything on the counter and getting the paperwork, you ask for his identification, and the husband immediately directs you toward his wife. This is a red flag that requires further conversation prior to moving on with the sale.

While in most (if not all) states spouses are allowed to effectively "share" firearm ownership, that doesn't get around the fact that both spouses must legally be allowed to own a firearm. Don't be shocked to see this in reverse, either. Sometimes husbands buy firearms for their prohibited wives or girlfriends to try to circumvent the system. Additionally, parent-to-child or vice versa might sound like a sweet gesture, but sometimes it's in fact a straw purchase attempt.





Photos: © Bill Konway





Handling a situation like this requires kid gloves, as they say. Obviously, you don't want to lose the easy sale or get punched in the nose, but those reasons are unfortunately not good enough to just continue with the paperwork. The first question to ask is if the gun is for the husband or the wife. In our case, it appears that the gun is for the husband but is being purchased by the wife. Sometimes the immediate response will be "Yes, it's for me," perhaps followed up with a comment like, "She's buying it for me for my birthday." The easiest way to try to remedy the situation is to state that you don't care who pays for it, but it needs to go in the end user's name. This will quickly clear up the situation. If the husband isn't attempting a straw purchase, he will lay down his identification. If he is, he will refuse, make a stink, and perhaps storm off. In every case, you made the right decision — just duck if you see a fist coming your way.

Friend for a Friend

Much like the spousal straw purchase, friends buying guns for friends requires additional con-

text before making the sale.

As you are going through the shotgun rack with a customer who is very knowledgeable about the different choices, he mentions how he has this exact shotgun and uses it regularly for waterfowl. That's not a red flag by any means — we all own multiple shotguns — but then he starts mentioning how his friend has been jealous of his for many years and will be shocked to get one for his birthday. That is the red flag you need to look for.

While, in most states, long gun transfers between individuals don't require background checks, sellers are still accountable for making sure firearms are only sold between individuals legally allowed to own firearms. Clearly, if you know of illegal ownership or transfers, it is a good idea to make sure that these types of straw purchases are thwarted at your shop and don't continue outside of it.

After looking over a few other choices, the customer states he wants to purchase said firearm. This is the time to ask the appropriate questions and be honest and upfront with the buyer. Start by confirming that the buyer is purchasing it for

a friend. A typical response may be "Yeah, it's his 40th birthday this weekend and all the guys are chipping in on it." You may sense no attempt at hiding the truth in his statement, but it still sounds a little fishy. Your next comment should simply state the truth, saying something like, "That's a great present, and I wish I had friends like that," but follow it up by stating the laws regarding straw purchases. Offer a few alternatives, like how he can pay for it in full, take the box with him, and have his friend come in and pick it up, or suggest that the buyer simply wrap up his and then tell the birthday boy he has a new one waiting for him at your shop, paid in full. Generally speaking, if it was an innocent misunderstanding, the buyer will take your ideas and run with them. If not, they may back away, and you could lose a legitimate sale. It's a tough decision to make, but ultimately the right one.

The Out-In Switcheroo

A customer comes in and goes through the gun case handling multiple handguns of different types, clearly searching for the right one. After





discussing features, calibers, etc., she states, “This is the one” and asks for the total with tax and the background check. You give her the total, and when you start bringing up the idea of starting a background check, she says she doesn’t have the money today, but she’ll be back on payday. After you offer a layaway to make sure the firearm is still in stock, she declines and walks out of the store. Perplexed, you put the gun back in the case and move on to the next customer. Not 15 minutes later, you notice another salesperson selling the exact gun you had just discussed with the previous potential buyer, but to a different person. That is your red flag.

While this could just be a by-chance coincidence (especially in a hot selling market like we’re currently experiencing), it is a good idea to ask your current customer if you can step away and engage your coworker. Start by asking the coworker some questions like, “Have you dealt with the buyer before?” or “Did the customer look at other options or just tell you exactly what they wanted?” If the coworker states previous history or a logical explanation, it might just be a coincidence. If they state the latter, that the buyer simply walked in and asked for exactly what they wanted, some additional investigation is needed.

A simple way to start resolving the situation is to walk out into the parking lot and look around for the original customer. While she might have bailed out after giving the instructions, if it is a straw purchase, it is just as likely that she’s still in the parking lot awaiting her new toy. If so, note what vehicle she is in and ask the new buyer what car they came in — casually, of course. They might inadvertently reveal their master plan, or they could deflect. In either case, ask some more questions about their purchase, such as, “Why did you pick this one?” or “Do you have many other handguns?” While these are basic questions, you might be able to pick up on their uneasiness. You can also be direct and say something like “Boy, another customer was just looking at that one, you got lucky it was in stock” followed by “I hope you aren’t buying that for them” with a good-hearted chuckle behind it. That should either scare them off or give you an indication that you are barking up the wrong tree. This is a tough situation to dissect, especially when the original buyer is nowhere to be found, but if you feel something is off, stop the sale. If you get the feeling it was just coincidence and it is legit, allow the sale to continue. Unless, of course, the customer pulls out a check for the exact amount before receiving the total that will draft from another person’s bank account!

Delayed Purchases (Days or Weeks)

A customer comes into the store, goes through the process of picking out a firearm, states they aren’t ready but wanted to get some ideas, and then leaves the store. That is everyday life in retail sales, so no red flag just yet. Two weeks later you see that customer in the store looking at clothing but note that the person he came in with is looking at firearms. Again, nothing to worry about. That all changes the moment the new customer brings up the original customer’s selection to the counter to purchase. That is your red flag.

While it is wholly plausible that the new buyer heard about the gun, is in a better financial situation to make a purchase, and wanted to buy it, especially when dealing with used guns, it is also plausible that they are simply buying something for a prohibited friend. In both cases, some discussion needs to take place before making the sale. Start by striking up a conversation with the original buyer by asking if they came back to make the purchase. That can go multiple directions, but let’s assume they deflect. The next step is to be direct and ask why their friend is buying the same firearm. They may state that they told their friend about it and that their friend wanted it for themselves, or they may deflect again. The key indicator here is the more they deflect, the less legitimate the sale sounds. If you get a bad feeling, point out the laws pertaining to straw purchases to both the old and new buyer and see if that will scare them off. If not, state the penalties. If the new buyer isn’t worried about and it seems legitimate, use your best judgment. If something is off, walk away. This situation is incredibly difficult to sniff out, and if you ever do, pat yourself on the back. Criminals can be crafty, and your sleuth skills have paid off.

While walking away from a sale is hard, don’t forget the responsibility of the seller and the punishment that you and the parties involved could receive. Not even the largest profit is worth risk. **HR**

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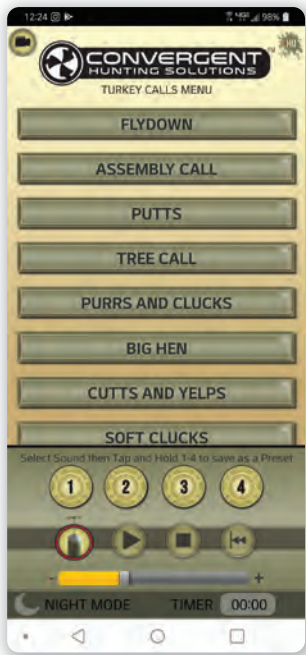
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HUNTING RETAILER

GEAR ROUNDUP

TURKEY GEAR

BY GORDY KRAHN



CONVERGENT HUNTING WILD TURKEY PRO APP

The Wild Turkey Pro app from Convergent Hunting is designed to work in conjunction with a special-purpose Bluetooth controlled speaker (Bullet HP) to produce realistic turkey sounds. And now hunters can video their hunts and control the calls at the same time. A transparent video controls overlay provides easy access to the presets and call controls while recording video. All turkey hunting sounds packaged in Convergent Hunting's Wild Turkey Pro calling app have been recorded in high definition and are digitally mastered to provide sounds that will elicit responses from even the most stubborn tom turkeys. MSRP for this system is as follows: \$3.99 for the app; \$350.85 for the Bullet HP; \$399.95 for the app, Bullet HP, Picatinny phone mount and carry bag combo.

www.convergenthunting.com

FLAMBEAU KING STRUTTER DECOY

Modeled after a design by award-winning master carver Dave Constantine, Flambeau's King Strutter decoy will enrage lurking gobblers with anatomical accuracy that is missing only a heartbeat — an evolution in turkey decoy innovation and realism. A keyhole stake plate accommodates a fixed position or a natural side-to-side full strut rotation of 60 degrees in a breeze. When fitted with either Flambeau's high-definition synthetic tail fan or a real tail fan, the realism becomes so alive that dominant toms respond with fury — right into the gun or bow sights. The King Strutter (MSRP \$139.99) includes a heavy-duty powder-coated steel stake, high-definition synthetic tail fan, synthetic beard and carry bag. Rule the roost this spring with realism that gets results.

www.flambeaoutdoors.com



ZINK CALLS WICKED SERIES BOX CALL

A collaboration between Zink Calls and NWTF Grand National Champion custom call maker Marlin Watkins, the Wicked Series box call (MSRP \$99.99) is a traditional-style box call constructed from poplar and extremely dense bloodwood. Its double-side design gets the job done two times over to produce different tones and emulate multiple hens. With Watkins' trademark style of "putting the turkey in the call," this box call produces astonishing and versatile natural turkey sounds, from soft calling to loud locating and everything in between — attracting tom turkeys with every stroke of the paddle. www.zinkcalls.com



MONTANA DECOY MISS PURRFACT XD

Montana Decoy's realistic, packable and lightweight 3D Miss Purrfect just got a whole lot more purrfect. Using an improved printing process with enhanced color and details to model a hen's natural iridescence, the new Miss Purrfect XD hen decoy (MSRP \$79.99) is designed to grab a gobbler's attention from long distances, and its taxidermy eyes will make him commit those last crucial yards. It transforms from a folded 9x3-inch dinner plate to a full 34-inch-long hen in a matter of seconds, and Perfect Pose technology allows the hunter to adjust the head and neck depending on the hunting situation — in a standing, feeding or breeding pose. Pair it with the Jake Purrfect XD decoy standing behind it to draw in wary toms. www.montanadecoy.com





FOXPRO HONEY POT SLATE CALL

Foxpro's Honey Pot striker call is a great addition to any serious turkey hunter's arsenal. Capable of rendering superior sound quality, volume and realism, it is made from honey locust wood, comes with a one-piece ipe wood striker and is available in crystal, slate and copper calling surface options. At \$59.95 MSRP, the Honey Pot features a glass tone board underneath the calling surface, enabling it to produce soft and subtle purrs and tree yelps, yet still delivers incredible volume for cuts, clucks and loud yelps for locating gobblers. The Honey Pot also features sound ports on the back for increased volume and sound projection and a laser-etched design on the back of the call. www.gofoxpro.com

LUCKY HD COLLAPSIBLE HEN TURKEY DECOY

The Lucky HD Collapsible Hen (MSRP \$49.99) is a multi-purpose turkey decoy that can be deployed as an upright hen or converted to a breeding hen when partially collapsed. Molded from flexible, crack-resistant 100 percent EVA plastic, it has exceptional detail and weighs only 1 pound. Great for run-and-gun hunters, the Lucky HD Hen collapses down to fit in a hunting vest or backpack and can be easily and quickly deployed when it's time to hunt. It also comes with an easy-to-pack two-piece folding metal stake that makes setup a breeze. www.luckyduck.com



FLEXTONE FUNKY CHICKEN GEN 2

Why don't tom turkeys pick on someone their own size? Because like all bullies, when they choose a weaker target, they stand a better chance of winning the fight. The Funky Chicken is the wimpiest, skinniest tom in the woods, and Flextone has upgraded the original design with a new molding pattern for even greater realism and durability. The result is an irresistible punching bag. Throw in a sturdy mounting stake and incredible paint detail and see just what this little twerp can do. He might be small, but he brings big results. Because of its collapsible design, the Funky Chicken Gen 2 (MSRP \$39.99) easily stores in a backpack or hunting vest. www.flextonegamecalls.com

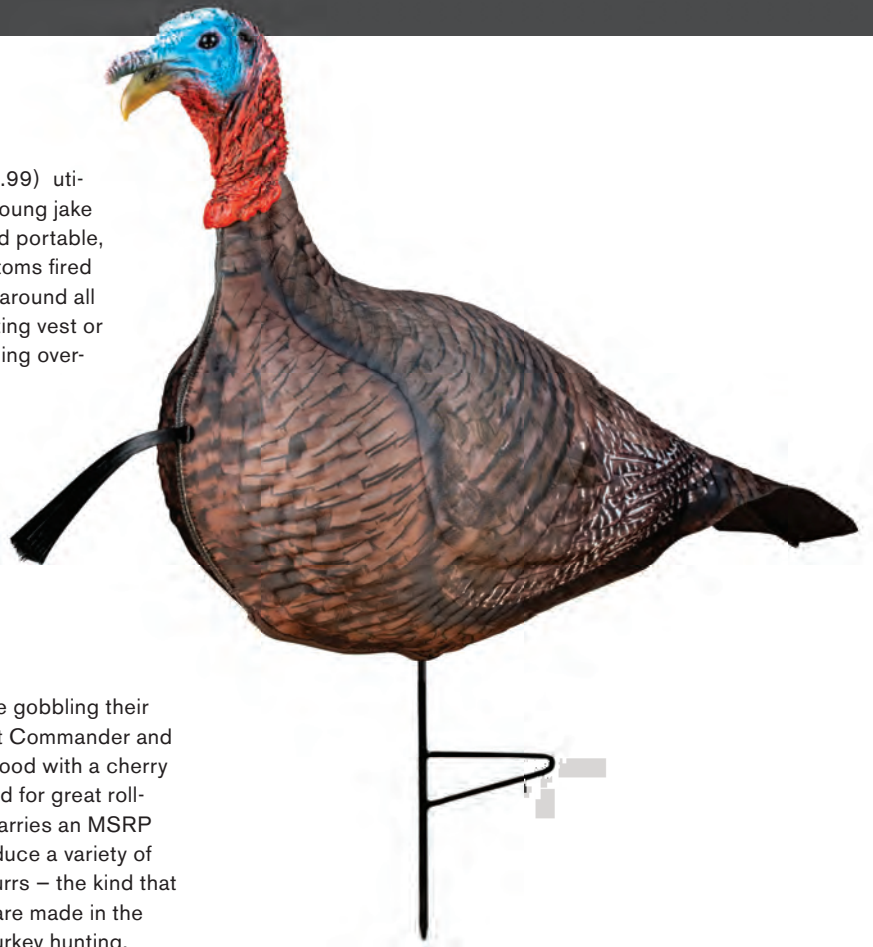
MOJO FATAL FAN

During certain phases of the spring breeding cycle, gobblers won't tolerate an invasion of their space, and savvy turkey hunters can take full advantage of their crabby disposition. The Mojo Fatal Fan is a lifelike artificial fan with a photo-realistic head mounted on a hinge that allows the fan to be laid back in an aggressive posture that drives tom turkeys wild. And both fan and stake fold to fit in a vest or coat to accommodate fleet-of-foot hunters. The Fatal Fan, which retails for \$39.99, provides the most convenient way to enjoy the wildly popular scoot-and-shoot style of hunting but can also serve double duty as a standard decoy. www.mojooutdoors.com



PRIMOS PHOTOFORM JAKE DECOY

The realistic Photoform Jake decoy from Primos (MSRP \$79.99) utilizes a proprietary process that prints the actual image of a young jake turkey on 3D molded foam. Extremely lightweight, flexible and portable, it projects an image just bold enough to get those territorial toms fired up and ready to fight. And not only is it light enough to carry around all day, but it will also collapse down to easily fit in a turkey hunting vest or backpack. Never again will hunters need to worry about lugging overweight decoys around in the turkey woods. www.primos.com

**STRUT COMMANDER HOUDINI BOX CALL**

When spring is in the air and tom turkeys are gobbling their heads off, grab a Houdini box call from Strut Commander and get to the woods – quick! Made of poplar wood with a cherry paddle, this premium box call is double-sided for great roll-over, producing realistic two-tone yelps. It carries an MSRP of \$25.99, comes pre-chalked and can produce a variety of sounds including yelps, cutts, clucks and purrs – the kind that make gobblers love-sick. Houdini box calls are made in the USA by craftsmen who have a passion for turkey hunting. www.strutcommander.com

**PETE RICKARD'S SQUEEZE-O-MATIC PUSH PIN TURKEY CALL**

The Squeeze-O-Matic push-pin turkey call from Pete Rickard's is easy to use and can be worked with one hand so hunters can have their other hand on the gun, ready to spring into action. In fact, the call is so simple to operate the company refers to it as its "walk and chew gum call," and even the novice caller can feel like a pro in the turkey woods when operating it. The Squeeze-O-Matic produces the yelps, clucks, purrs and cackles of both hens and gobblers. Even fighting sounds can be produced on this versatile call, and it carries an MSRP of \$23.55. www.peterickard.com

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN HUNTING CALLS DIRTY TRICK POT CALL**

The Dirty Trick pot call from RMHC is ultra-thin, so it fits easily in a turkey vest or shirt pocket, and it's simple to operate. Its aluminum friction call surface creates incredible high-volume, high-pitched yelps, clucks and purrs that will carry in thick timber or windy prairies and drive tom turkeys crazy. Its one-piece hardwood striker has a carbon-fiber tip inserted into the shaft to produce realistic sounds in all weather conditions. At an MSRP of \$24.59, the Dirty Trick joins the Captain Hook, One-Eyed Tweet, Sharp Tooth Jack and Black Max diaphragms, Strike A Strut slate pot call and Strutter box call in RMHC's turkey call lineup. www.rockymountainhuntingcalls.com



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Industry Achieves Remarkable Results in Year Unlike Any Other



COVID-19 impacted almost every business in 2020, and the firearms and hunting industry was no exception.

BY JOE BARTOZZI, NSSF PRESIDENT & CEO

The year 2020 was one for the record books, literally. Those 12 months were among the most challenging, eventful and remarkable ever witnessed by the firearm industry. Although I am generally very optimistic, 2021 promises to be even more challenging.

Rather than dwelling on what's likely to come with the new administration, it is worth looking back on what NSSF accomplished for our industry in 2020. We must have a sober assessment of all we've weathered and achieved to have a clear picture of what's in store and prepare for the future.

The industry's biggest challenge was nothing short of remaining in existence. When the coronavirus pandemic struck and government authorities began issuing shutdown orders, the NSSF's Government Relations teams, both Federal and State Affairs, quickly stepped in. The single-most important achievement was the firearm industry's inclusion in the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity & Critical Infrastructure Agency Essential Critical Infrastructure List. The industry was included for simple, but vital reasons.

First, health emergencies don't end our rights, including the right to keep and bear arms. Given the potential disruption and chaos, that right in particular only becomes more pronounced. Second, our manufacturers were required to continue to deliver on U.S. military contracts. Our service

members rely on our manufacturers, just as do American citizens. Last, the overwhelming majority of law enforcement agencies procure and maintain firearms for community safety through local retailers and ranges. They needed to operate to provide that service to our communities.

That was a significant achievement that benefitted our entire industry and every consumer of firearms and ammunition in this country. That's why NSSF was so humbled and grateful to Laurie Lipsey-Aronson for presenting us with the North American Sporting Goods Wholesalers Chairwoman's Award for the extraordinary contributions to the industry.

Those achievements resulted in record-setting firearm sales, far exceeding previous records, set in 2016, of 15.7 million. That's an incredible feat NSSF shares with manufacturers, distributors and retailers across the board. Everyone adapted to these unexpected events and made this record-setting year possible.

NSSF was able to achieve much more. I was at the White House for the signing of the Great American Outdoors Act, the most significant conservation law passed in our lifetime. This law, which was championed by NSSF, will provide full, dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and addresses maintenance backlogs on federal lands. This

NSSF
The Firearm Industry
Trade Association



helps to open our public lands for all Americans to conserve and enjoy for generations ahead. NSSF also supported the America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act. That Act addresses the NSSF priority of creating a task force and authorizes funding to stop the spread of chronic wasting disease, which is ravaging cervids. It also reauthorizes the North American Wetlands Conservation Act to conserve waterfowl habitat.

NSSF's Federal Affairs team secured funding requests for the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), which are vital to keeping our industry operating. NSSF's efforts to increase public access to hunting and the shooting sports resulted in Interior Secretary David Bernhardt opening 97 wildlife refuges to hunting and fishing, giving Americans access to 2.3 million additional acres of public lands. Veterans and Gold Star families were given free access to federal public lands in perpetuity, recognizing their sacrifices for our nation's freedom. In addition, gray wolves were delisted from the Endangered Species Act and management of them returned to state agencies.

The State Affairs team was just as busy. Much of the fight to keep retailers and ranges open was conducted in the states. NSSF's team turned back closure orders and challenged gun-control efforts attempting to capitalize on the pandemic.

The State Affairs team made gains elsewhere, too, such as changing South Carolina's hunting apprentice law to extend the hunter recruitment efforts, for example. Industry protection laws were passed in Louisiana, Utah adopted a constitutional amendment to protect the right to hunt and fish, and Pennsylvanians are hunting on Sunday for the first time in memory, due to

NSSF's work. NSSF blocked gun-control efforts in Washington state and Oregon, defeated attempted bans on traditional ammunition in Louisiana and Minnesota, and stopped the repeal of pre-emption laws in New Mexico. Congressional gun-control efforts withered in the U.S. Senate due to NSSF's diligence to convince lawmakers these weren't good for the industry or America.

This year, NSSF supported the confirmation and seating of Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett to the U.S. Supreme Court. Justice Barrett is a dedicated originalist, meaning she interprets law as it is written, not as a mere "guideline" for ideologies. This gives the industry hope that a U.S. Supreme Court will take up and rule for industry-priority cases, including closely watched cases challenging bans on modern sporting rifles and magazines.

There was no shortage of work in 2020. Pro-gun and pro-industry candidates overperformed in the elections. Pollsters projected increasing gains for gun control in Congress, but the opposite bore out. Gun-control lawmakers lost seats. As of this writing, the U.S. Senate is narrowly held by Republicans. Senators David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler are favored to win their run-offs, ensuring that a majority will remain to fend off gun-control attacks and attempts to alter our government, our Supreme Court, and our states.

The industry is taking former Vice President Joe Biden at his word when it comes to gun control. We will be on guard for threats to the industry through legislation and regulation, working to make sure our industry continues to thrive, just as we did in 2020.

There are no doubt challenges ahead, and that mettle will be tested. But with the support of this great industry, and the dedication of our entire team at NSSF, I remain steadfast and optimistic that we will be ready for any challenge. **HR**

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HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS

BY GORDY KRAHN



PYRAMEX VENTURE GEAR AMPBT ELECTRONIC BLUETOOTH EARMUFFS

Pyramex Safety's Venture Gear AmpBT electronic earmuffs combine sound compression with Bluetooth connectivity and are now available in black, desert tan and urban gray. They not only compress harmful sounds to safe levels thanks to Rapid Noise Suppression technology, they also amplify surrounding sounds so the user can hear more clearly. AmpBT earmuffs feature an impressive Noise Reduction Rating of 26dB. And with Bluetooth, it's easy to stay connected with friends or listen to music wirelessly. The muffs are ergonomically arched with a cushioned headband for maximum comfort and automatically shut off after four hours to save battery life when not in use. **MSRP: \$90.50. www.pyramexsafety.com**

EAA CORP. 228 FIELD SHOTGUN

For upland and small-game hunters who want a lighter shotgun with less kick, European American Armory Corporation has introduced the Churchill 228 Field model – a semi-auto chambered in 28-gauge. This weather-resistant shotgun features great balance for making tough shots and is available with a 26- or 28-inch vented-rib barrel with a front bead sight for quick target acquisition. Built on a durable synthetic stock and forend, it comes with Mobile choke tubes and is also available in a Youth model for younger or smaller-framed hunters, sporting a shorter 24-inch barrel a 13-inch length of pull. EAA Corp. stock spacers give the shotgun a custom fit that can be adjusted as the young hunter grows. **MSRP: \$414. www.eaacorp.com**

SPYPOINT LINK-S-DARK TRAIL CAMERA

As part of Spypoint's LTE-network connected Link series of trail cameras, the new Link-S-Dark transfers photos via a cellular network so hunters can stop making disruptive weekly trips to pull SD cards. The Link-S-Dark uses an integrated solar panel and lithium battery to extend battery life to keep the camera charged and running for months on end and its HIT (hybrid illumination technology) flash system further reduces pressure on game by allowing the user to select one of four flash settings, including invisible no-glow mode. The Link-S-Dark features a blistering fast .07-second trigger speed to catch all of the action and like all Spypoint cellular trail cameras is available in two wireless carrier models. **MSRP: \$299.99. www.spypoint.com**



FIREFIELD 20-60X60AE SPOTTING SCOPE KIT

The 20-60x60AE spotting scope kit represents the top tier in the Firefield spotting scope category – its wide magnification range, fully multicoated lenses and durable body providing hunters with the confidence to locate their target in the most challenging terrain and weather conditions. It features a comfortable rubber eyepiece and quick-focus knob to help focus-in quickly at short and long distances. The Firefield 20-60x60AE spotting scope also features a nitrogen-purged body with a built-in sunshade for reduced sun glare and added protection from rain. Its heavy-duty, full-size, fully adjustable tripod stows easily and securely into the included nylon carrying case. **MSRP: \$95.99. www.fire-field.com**



TENZING HANGTIME BACKPACK

The Tenzing Hangtime backpack is designed so treestand hunters can easily access their gear via its specially designed pockets. Once attached to the hanger, the pack maintains its shape thanks to a rigid, EVA-molded shell, allowing one-hand access through the top or front to anything inside the generous 750-cubic-inch main compartment. Organized storage and access are further facilitated by a variety of specialized pockets and external Molle attachment points. The Hangtime also features six specialized storage compartments for an array of accessories and two quiver attachment points for right- or left-hand use and a removable, ambidextrous bow carrier. The underside EVA compartment of the pack includes a Plano StowAway utility box, ideal for compartmentalizing smaller items. **MSRP: \$199.99. www.tenzingoutdoors.com**





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Are CRM Systems for You?

Turn one-time customers into repeat customers with a customer relationship management system.

BY BOB ROBB

Digital marketing should be part of your business plan. Right? Traditional marketing programs like local newspapers and even local radio targeting commuters that worked so well in the past have shown to be less effective in recent years. While these media outlets can still be productive in select markets, smart retailers have turned to the digital world to try to attract new business. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest and others are working. For niche audience marketing to hunters, digital marketing strategies such as local search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click advertising like Google Ads can provide quantifiable results, unlike traditional advertising methods.

As with most social media advertising policies, Google Ads also prohibits advertisements for guns, explosives and other weapons. Ads for gun parts and associated items that increase the safety of a gun such as gun locks, trigger locks and chamber blocks are permitted, as are advertisements for hunting gear and accessories. Though firearms can't be promoted directly, you can find success attracting customers by promoting non-firearm hunting products.

So, then, you've used a variety of marketing strategies to entice new business, and a new customer who has learned about your business suddenly appears. Your goal is to make that person a repeat customer, either at the store or via your website. How do you measure the metrics that improve the chances for repeat business? One effective tool is a customer relationship management system, or CRM.

In the good old days, after you gathered customer information (if you collected any at all), the info was jotted down in a notebook or typed onto a laptop or tablet, filed away someplace, and often forgotten. Maybe you counted on remembering some stuff, and the end result was that when someone asked you how you defined your customers or the changes in the current local business environment, you simply said, "I've been here for decades and I know my market!" And while seat-of-the-pants marketing strategies produced by experienced shop owners and staffers can, in fact, produce some new revenue, in today's highly competitive world, smart businesses take it to another level. A CRM can help you do just that.

A CRM system helps businesses keep customer contact details up to date, track every customer interaction, and manage customer accounts. Every time a store staffer interacts with an existing or potential new customer, they learn something new and potentially valuable. A CRM takes customer data and turns it into useful, actionable insight that can help you make marketing decisions based on hard data. It helps everyone in a business to easily update records and to access the latest information. If the system is cloud based, it can be accessed from anywhere.

There are three basic types of CRM systems: desktop, server and cloud. A desktop system that runs on a single computer is really designed for a single user who just needs an electronic version of a Rolodex for simple customer contact management. For most businesses, the key question to answer is, server or cloud? A client/server system has a central database stored on a server, usually self-hosted with software installed on each user's PC or laptop to access it. A cloud-based system is supplied and hosted online by a third-party provider, and it is accessible anywhere via a connected device. Some even provide mobile capabilities, allowing salespeople to access key information wherever they are and update that information immediately after meeting clients while still out of the shop. A mobile CRM actually allows you to run a whole business from a smartphone. This can also support working from home.

Some CRM systems also support the integration of social media channels into their platforms alongside traditional channels. Social CRM makes it possible for a business to communicate with customers using the channel of their choice — phone, text, chat, email or social media. Off the back of these interactions, a social CRM system helps businesses gather actionable insight about customer sentiment on their company, their brand, and specific products or services. And some CRM

systems can use artificial intelligence (AI) to learn from available data in order to make recommendations based on the targeted needs of customers.

Data gleaned from a CRM system can help your business produce marketing campaigns that specifically target previous customers, as well as visitors to your website, in order to get them back in the door and/or onto your e-commerce platform.

What does it cost? CRM pricing is based on many factors, including the size of your business and the number of users, with a business paying only for what it actually needs. Additional users and applications can be added as a business expands, so the CRM system grows with the business. Basic services can start at less than a hundred bucks a month and rise up to several hundred dollars per month, depending. This is one of those business options which, before committing, you have to run a cost/benefit ratio analysis on to see if it is right for you.

At the end of the day, nobody knows the needs of your business and its customers more than you do. And I've always believed that, regardless of what data tells me, there is no substitute for experience in a local market. Still, when combined with your knowledge and experience, having access to the kind of organized and laser-focused data a CRM system provides can help immensely in planning future marketing programs, and even in making purchasing and inventory decisions. In today's world, where e-commerce competition is coming from everywhere, including megagiants like Amazon and Walmart, niche retailers like Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's, Midway USA and Brownell's, and even the manufacturer's websites of the same products you carry on your store's shelves, you need every edge you can get.

Have you ever used a CRM? If so, how has it worked for you? Drop me a note at editor@grandviewoutdoors.com. I'd love to hear your thoughts. **HR**

PRO STAFF

Bob Robb has been a full-time outdoor writer since 1978. He's a former staff editor for *Peterson's Hunting magazine*, as well as the former editor of *Western Outdoor News*, *Peterson's Bowhunting*, *Inside Archery*, *Whitetail Journal*, *Predator Xtreme* and *Waterfowl & Retriever* magazines. He's hunted on five continents with both rifles and archery equipment and lived in Alaska for 15 years, where for a time he held an assistant hunting guide's license.



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