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Big Horn Armory Relocates to Larger Manufacturing Facility in Cody, Wyoming

Big Horn Armory, makers of big-bore firearms, has completed the relocation of its offices and manufacturing facilities to 319 N. Blackburn St., Cody, Wyoming, 82414. The new facility is over five times the size of the previous location, providing more manufacturing space to operate additional machines and better facilities for building BHA's firearms. It also provides increased space for maintaining a larger inventory. These factors combine to make BHA's operations run much

more smoothly and efficiently than at the old facility and will aid in improving lead times in the next few months.

BHA has increased its workforce in the manufacturing department by 20 percent since October 2021 and intends to double its staff by year-end. All of the new equipment has CNC capacity with a mix of mills and lathes and barrel-making equipment, which will help to lessen the dependency upon outside vendors. BHA has consistently been add-

ing vendors over the past year and intends to add more. With a larger pool of sourcing suppliers, supply chain issues will be minimized and will help to reduce lead times on customer orders.

"We believe in building American-made, heirloom-quality firearms with attention to detail offered in unique, big-bore calibers and as such have invested in our manufacturing capabilities to match up with our beliefs," stated Greg Buchel, owner of Big Horn Armory. "We

appreciate our customers' patience during this relocation process. As we finish settling in to the new facility, we continue to fulfill our orders and implement improvements to meet our customers' needs. We anticipate reducing our lead times by half or better once we are 100 percent up and running."

Dealers, email bworthen@big-hornarmory.com for pricing and programs.

Hunting License Sales Remain Strong

Data released from the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sport documented a slight decrease in hunting license sales in 2021 compared to 2020. That said, the sales numbers remain strong.

"It's important to note that a hunting license sale does not necessarily equal a participant, but we often use sales as an indicator of participation trends," said the Council's Director of Research and Partnerships Charles 'Swanny' Evans. Evans went on to present the findings of the Hunting License Sales 2020-2021 report. This study was the follow-up to the COVID-19 and Hunting License Sales report the Council released last year, document-

ing a 4.9% increase in hunting license sales from 2019 to 2020. Working with Southwick Associates, the Council collected monthly resident and nonresident hunting license sales data from 46 state wildlife agencies to quantify and compare 2021 to 2020 sales. Among the 46 reporting states:

Overall, hunting license sales decreased by approximately 1.9% in 2021 compared to 2020.

Resident license sales were down 4.0%.

Nonresident license sales increased by 12.9%.

Vista To Split Into Separate Outdoor And Sporting Companies

Vista Outdoor, Inc. announced that its Board of Directors has unanimously approved a plan to separate its Outdoor Products and Sporting Products segments into two independent, publicly-traded companies. Following separation, Chris Metz will be appointed CEO of Outdoor Products while Jason Vanderbrink will be appointed CEO of Sporting Products.

The company expects to create these companies through a tax-free spin-off of its Outdoor Products segment to Vista Outdoor shareholders.

Following the separation, the company's Outdoor Products seg-

ment will be a platform of outdoor brands including CamelBak, Bell, Giro, Camp Chef, Bushnell, Bushnell Golf, Foresight Sports, Stone Glacier, and QuietKat. As an independent company, the Sporting Products segment will continue to focus on ammunition categories through its Federal, Remington, CCI, Speer, Estate Cartridge, and HEVI-Shot brands.

The separation is expected to create the following benefits:

- Enhanced strategic focus with resources to support each company's operations and growth drivers.
- Tailored capital allocations to

support each company's business model and goals.

- Enhanced ability to attract and retain employee talent to execute strategic and operational objectives.

- Differentiated and investment opportunities based on each company's business model and well-positioned to create market value.

- The improved focus will all Outdoor Products to continue M&A in the outdoor recreation products marketplace and enable Sporting Products to secure partnerships with other manufacturers.

"Following a thorough assessment of Vista Outdoor's businesses,

operations and value creation opportunities, the Board determined that a spin-off of its Outdoor Products business would unlock significant value," said Michael Callahan, chairman, Board of Directors. "We are committed to working together through this transformative process to ensure that each company is optimized with the right teams and resources in place so that it can continue to deliver innovative, quality products that enhance outdoor experiences and create value for its shareholders."





AMERICAN TACTICAL INC. INTRODUCES CAVALRY SHOTGUNS

American Tactical Inc. is proud to showcase the Cavalry Shotgun line, exclusively from ATI. ATI is now offering the Cavalry Shotguns in 12GA, 20GA and .410GA models. All three models have 4140 chrome moly steel 26" or 28" barrel that is chrome plated on the inside and outside. Additionally, a 30" barrel is available in 12GA only.

All models also come with five threaded interchangeable Beretta/Benelli mobil style choke tubes, 3" chamber (magnum), single selective trigger, a brass front bead sight, and a Turkish walnut oil finished stock.

"We are very proud to offer such a beautiful line of quality shotguns," says Tony DiChario,

President, and CEO at American Tactical Inc. "Their quality and price point surpass any shotgun line that we have ever offered, and we knew that we wanted to bring that to our customers."

All three ATI Cavalry Shotguns have an MSRP of \$599.95, making it a super value price item for any hunter, collector, or sportsman.

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Understanding What Motivates Your Workers

Following these simple management principles will help you get the most out of your employees.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus once observed that the only thing that is constant is change. That's particularly true in today's business world, and it'll become even more so in the years ahead, as an estimated 85 million baby boomers begin to retire or take on reduced job roles, paving the way for a seismic shift in managerial ranks.

In other words, get ready for a lot of new managers in workplaces nationwide, says Kirk Lawrence, a program director of executive development at the University of North Carolina Kenan-Flagler Business School.

With those facts in mind, Lawrence — who has more than 35 years of experience in leading both large and small organizations —

says it's more important than ever to make sure managers know how to effectively lead and communicate. That's no small challenge, he says, noting that while many companies recognize there's a causal relationship between developing strong leaders and organizational success, most also concede they're not doing enough in terms of succession planning.

"The challenge is that it takes a heavy investment in time, people and money," he says. "(Preparing managers) is a particularly timely topic for organizations interested in maintaining continuity — retaining the people who know your culture and strategies."

For new managers who may find themselves on their own, Lawrence has developed five solid tips to

consider as they embrace their new leadership role. The tips focus less on technical proficiencies and more on the human and emotional "soft skills" that truly set good managers apart.

"You have to understand people and what motivates them — how to get the most out of them," he says. "Even in a small company with only 10 or 15 people, each individual responds differently to challenges, stress and incentives, and if you don't understand the human aspects of all that, you kind of miss the boat."

1. Be a Good Follower

Unless you're a workplace unicorn — that special, gifted person who's a born leader — most leadership skills stem from experience



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gleaned while working your way up through an organization. As such, learning how to follow is invaluable to eventually becoming a manager.

“You’ve got to learn what it’s like to be in the trenches and get exposure to good and less-than-good leadership styles,” Lawrence says. “If you learn what it’s like to be a worker bee, you learn good managerial skills as a result.”

And as counterintuitive as it may seem, experience with a bad leader can be just as valuable as the alternative.

“You’re a far better leader from being exposed to bad management, because you learn a lot about how not to treat people,” Lawrence says.

In addition, he points out that people who are good followers (he calls it the practice of “follower-ship”) pick up five essential skills from doing so: awareness, diplomacy, courage, collaboration and critical thinking.

2. Listen and Learn.

Eager to make their mark, many new managers start out with the proverbial rush to judgment — a scorched-earth makeover of prior practices and processes.

“They jump to conclusions and question everything done by the

previous manager, as well as criticize that manager,” Lawrence says.

His advice? Slow down and listen — you just might learn something by not trying to move the needle too quickly. Ask people what worked well and what didn’t. And never forget that 85% of learning is acquired by listening.

“If you take a step back and assess the playing field you’re on, you may find that you have good ideas, but the timing may not be right to implement them,” he says. “Don’t destroy the village while trying to save it by being too rash or questioning the competency of the person you replaced. You never know: That person might again be your boss or could even be a potential client. Be judicious with your comments and assessments.”

As you take in the lay of the land, it’s also important to figure out which employees you can trust — find out who’s credible and who’s not. And that’s something that can be gleaned from listening.

3. Practice the Ethic of Reciprocity

This bit of advice could easily fall under the “everything I needed to know in life I learned in kindergarten” category. It’s also known as the golden rule: Treat others as

you’d have them treat you. That’s an essential policy for managers, who should understand that a promotion to a position of authority doesn’t automatically guarantee the support of your employees.

“If you treat people with respect and dignity and give them a sense of validation, you can get them to do things that are difficult and distasteful,” Lawrence says. “It doesn’t work all the time, but as a rule, it’s a pretty good principle.”

4. Don’t Confuse Likability With Respect

This is especially true for managers who are promoted from within and end up leading the same people with whom they were sharing jokes at the water cooler before the promotion.

“Too many new managers want to be the cool person,” Lawrence says. “They think that if their employees like them, they’ll be able to make things happen. But it doesn’t always work out that way.

“You can never forget you’re in a supervisory position. And if something goes south, they’re going to be out to save their own skins. You gain respect for your ability to be a good leader. If they know you’ll always be fair and listen to them, they’ll have the confidence to trust

you when things don’t go well.”

At times, every manager has to make unpopular decisions, and they’re tougher to make if you’re always out socializing with your direct reports and trying to be their best friend. But if you’ve built a culture of respect for your team, you can make those decisions and still maintain their trust.

“It’s OK to go and have a beer with your team,” Lawrence says. “But remember that you’re the boss — you have to maintain a little separation.”

5. You’re Defined by Your Integrity

Whatever you do, don’t compromise your integrity. Organizations that honor ethics and integrity experience less employee turnover, more engaged workers and higher levels of customer satisfaction, Lawrence says.

“Compromising integrity is a slippery slope,” he says. “Once you fudge a number or are dishonest with a client, it becomes easier to do it again. And at the end of the day, everyone wants to do business with someone whose word is their bond.”

That means always doing the right thing — even when no one is looking. **HR**



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E-Collars

Hunting dogs come with their own set of gear needs. One such need you should be stocking is e-collars. Try these three models in your store.

BY MARK CHESNUT

There was a time in the not-too-distant past when e-collars were brand new and somewhat primitive, and many who tried to use the training aids actually misused them, sometimes causing irreparable harm to their dog-training process. Fortunately, e-collars have come a long way in the past few decades. Most now are much more sophisticated and easier to use, and they're considered by most to be viable, humane training aids.

Today's modern e-collars are, indeed, more than just the "shock collars" of yesteryear. True, there are some that are designed solely to send stimulation to a dog — whether a beep, buzz or mild electrical impulse — and they undoubtedly have their place in training bird dogs, retrievers, spaniels, hounds and a variety of other types of hunting and even non-hunting dogs.

Others are designed solely for tracking canines and have built-in GPS function in both the collar and the handheld transmitter. These typically tell hunters or others utilizing them which direction their dog is and how far it is away from the transmitter. These are especially handy for big-running bird dogs who tend to be out of eyesight for extended periods of time and also will stand pointed on birds for hours regardless of how loudly you call them. These collars typically have an extended range, many tracking the collar five or more miles away.

Still others are designed as "track and train" units, giving dog owners the ability to track their dogs and also administer training stimulation with the same unit. These are commonly more expensive, but many people find them well worth the extra money since they perform two functions and alleviate the need for separate collars for training and tracking.

One word of note is needed here. Regardless of what some people with little knowledge of training collars might say, these devices are not innately cruel or inhumane. Yes, when misused, they can be both of those things. But when used properly, they pose no danger to a dog. It's easy to see that simply by watching a retriever or pointing dog run up to his owner and stick his neck out waiting to have his collar put in place so he can get about the business of doing what he loves to do.

Now, let's take a brief look at three e-collars common on the market, exploring what they offer and some of their advantages and disadvantages.



DOGTRA PATHFINDER

The Dogtra Pathfinder is a unique track-and-train collar in that it has no handheld transmitter, but instead utilizes your cell phone and a corresponding smartphone app to control both the tracking and training functions.

I used a Pathfinder for about three years until I recently made a change, and I found it to do everything as advertised. However, it was a little hard for me – being a somewhat old guy who isn't very tech savvy – to operate it efficiently. For me, it was great for tracking, and it was easy to get to the screen where I could see all my collared dogs at the same time. However, using the training function was difficult. It seemed that right when I needed it, the screen was on another dog. Or – and this really happened a time or two – right when I was walking in to flush a bird and planned to use the training function if a correction was needed, someone would call me on my phone and the screen would go to my caller ID screen, leaving me hanging for the training scenario.

Don't get me wrong: I used the Pathfinder successfully for a number of years before I finally decided to make a change. Operating the functions of the system from my cell phone was just more of a hassle than I was willing to put up with because I never really took the time to learn all the functions well enough to fully utilize the training aspect.

In the end, it's a good, budget-minded unit that most hunters and dog trainers will find completely functional, and the \$399 price tag historically put it way less expensive than its competitors – until recently.



GARMIN ALPHA 10

I ended the section on the Dogtra with “until recently” because Garmin recently shook up the world of track and train collars. In the past, Garmin – the undisputed leader in all things GPS – offered a number of track-and-train collars, but the price point was well beyond what many hunters and dog trainers were willing to pay. The new Garmin Alpha 10, at \$499, changed all that by offering Garmin quality and reliability at only \$100 more than the Dogtra Pathfinder unit.

With a handheld unit much smaller than its predecessors, the Garmin 10 offers tracking and training for up to 20 dogs and has an astounding range of about nine miles. Users are able to store a custom training setting for each dog and toggle through dogs on the screen with a “joystick” located above the screen.

For those who don't need the training function, the Alpha 10 can also be used with Garmin's tracking-only T5 or T5 mini collars. That makes it legal for most pointing dog field trials, where the units are left off during competition unless a dog is lost and the handler has to resort to using the collar to find it after being out of contention. Best of all, the Alpha 10 is compatible with my Garmin Instinct watch, allowing me to keep the handheld in my vest pocket and monitor where my dogs are during training simply by glancing at my watch.

I can't, however, say the unit is always intuitive and easy to use – at least for me. At many times I end up on the wrong screen and don't have sufficient knowledge to find my way back where I want to be. Also, the training function is more difficult than many units because I have to toggle through dogs, then use a button that isn't raised and difficult to find without looking.

All in all, however, this is a great collar at a really good price that has helped many people get a Garmin who wouldn't have thought it possible before this unit was introduced.

SPORTDOG SPORHUNTER

Some hunters and dog trainers don't need a tracking function for a variety of reasons. If they train retrievers, they seldom run a quarter mile or more away, making a GPS unit unnecessary. Likewise, some people with close-working dogs who they keep visual contact with at nearly all times find a tracking function to be somewhat of an unneeded luxury that's not worth the added expense. Those are the people looking for a simple training unit.

To say that this is an easy-to-use unit would be an understatement. I've used one off and on for a couple of years and believe it to be one of the most straight-forward collars on the market that should be intuitive for nearly anyone – even people who've not used an e-collar before – without having to take their eyes off their dogs.

There are several SportHunter models in the SportDog lineup. All have up to 21 levels of static stimulation with low and medium range, as well as options to train with vibration or tone. Most support up to three dogs, and it's easy to choose which dog you are training by flipping a simple toggle switch on the front of the handheld device.

The SportDog system utilizes lithium-ion batteries that charge in about two hours and last 50 to 70 hours per charge. Plus, the system has low-battery indicators so you're never left hanging out in the field. With a range of about one-half mile, this unit will certainly meet the training collar needs of the vast majority of hunters and even many field trialers. **HR**





Increase Your Cut of Sales With 12 Great Hunting Knives

Stay on the cutting edge of knife sales with these models.

BY KEVIN REESE

“If you need anything, it’s a good knife... always have a good knife.” His ability to look at me, dish sage advice and simultaneously slice up an apple was uncanny. He never once cut himself but must have cut barrels of apples with that little Case knife — his everyday carry of choice. When we lost him, I stumbled upon a pile of those Case folders, and his advice rang as clearly as ever while I looked them over. Even today, I have a soft spot for those little Case blades. Of course, I also understand as an outdoorsman that, like many tools, knives are purpose-driven, and what we choose to carry can be subjective — even represent our individual attributes to some extent, especially on the hunt. As retailers, helping customers determine the best knives for their purposes while also determining which features best check their personal boxes can be taxing, yet you want to be that one-stop shop. As such, knives can be a great way to sharpen sales skills and increase revenue, but you need a healthy assortment. Consider these 12 great hunting blades to up your cut of knife sales.



BROWNING PRIMAL KODIAK

One important element lacking in virtually every knife included in this roundup is a bone saw. That said, what could be better than a bone saw as part of a complete single-knife field-dressing set? Enter the Browning Primal Kodiak. The Primal Kodiak is a folding multi-tool hunting knife boasting three purpose-driven blades: a 3.5-inch drop-point blade, a guthook blade, and a bone saw. All blades are constructed of 8Cr13MoV stainless steel, tuck perfectly into the Primal Kodiak’s textured, polymer, rubber over-molded grip, and stay there compliments of Browning’s lock-back system. The Browning Primal Kodiak Knife includes a nylon pouch and just might be the only field-to-table knife system your hunting customer needs. www.browning.com





OUTDOOR EDGE RAZORGUIDE PAK

For most of us, the real work comes after the kill. Factors like the animal's size may require numerous steps and several knives to efficiently field-dress game and process meat. For those moments, a field-dressing knife set like the RazorGuide Pak is a perfect solution. The RazorGuide Pak includes RazorBone and RazorCape knives, as well as a Flip N Zip Saw. The RazorBone knife measures 10.8 inches overall and includes five blades: a 3.9-inch gutting blade, two drop-point blades and two boning/fillet blades. The RazorCape knife measures 7.1 inches and includes two 3-inch caping blades constructed of Japanese 420J2 stainless steel. The RazorCape also features a Grivory handle with TPR inserts and a stainless-steel pocket clip. The Flip N Zip Saw measures 9.4 inches and is constructed of 6061-T6 aluminum handle and a chrome-coated steel blade. The RazorGuide Pak stores in a 6.5 x 2.5 x 2.5-inch nylon roll-pack.

www.outdooredge.com



OUTDOOR EDGE RAZORMAX

From multi-tool functionality to replaceable-blade designs and storage, Outdoor Edge seems quite comfortable on the cutting edge of the hunting knife industry. We like one-stop shopping, and Outdoor Edge remains laser-focused on multi-function, compact knife designs capable of handling A to Z hunting tasks – and the RazorMax is a great example.

Great for big game, upland birds and fish, too, the Outdoor Edge RazorMax multitasks with two blade types, a 3.5-inch drop point for field dressing and a 5-inch blade for boning and filleting. Of course, the RazorMax doesn't stop with two blades; the set includes three blades of each type. The RazorMax is a fixed-blade hunting knife system measuring 8 inches (drop point) or 9.5 inches (boning/fillet), and it stores in a rugged nylon sheath. The textured, slip-resistant handle assures a confident grip even when things get messy, and the set includes a compact replacement-blade storage box. www.outdooredge.com



CASE UTILITY HUNTER

Case knives have been a household name, and household tools, far beyond my own years, and I now count my Pop's aged collection of Case blades as my own. That said, the utility of a number of Case Knives as hunting tools cannot be overstated – they certainly earn their own places in this roundup beyond heirloom attributes alone. One such tool is the Case Utility Hunter; of course, it also definitely oozes heirloom quality. It's the type of knife sure to be appreciated over multiple generations. The Case Utility Hunter boasts a 5-inch, Tru-Sharp, high-carbon, stainless steel, clip-point blade and polished leather handle, and includes a leather sheath. www.caseknives.com



CASE WINKLER HAMBONE

Forged from a collaboration between Case Knives and Army SSgt Clinton Rome-sha, a recipient of our nation's Medal of Honor as a result of actions at the Battle of Kamdesh in Afghanistan, the Case Winkler Hambone knife is much more than a hunting blade – it is a master-crafted multipurpose tool. While the Case Winkler knife is full-size, the 4.9-inch, 80CRV2 hambone-shaped, Caswell-finished hunting blade and rich, curly maple handle create perfect balance in a light-weight, heirloom-quality knife system sure to deliver a lifetime of reliable cutting performance. The Case Winkler also is available with a textured, black, layered, laminate, slip-resistant handle, and includes a durable Kydex sheath, as well as a lifetime warranty. www.caseknives.com



BUCK KNIVES 110 FOLDING HUNTER

Since Hoyt Buck's first knife in 1902 and the company's subsequent founding in 1961, Buck Knives has certainly been a household name and outdoorsman favorite through several generations. And, while my Pop had acquired a number of Case knives, his collection also included a couple of iconic Buck 110 folders. Indeed, since 1964, the American-made Buck Knives 110 Folding Hunter Knife has been foundational to the company's success and remains a top seller today. The Buck 110 measures 4 7/8 inches long, folded, and boasts a 3.75-inch 420HC steel, clipped crescent-tip blade and Crelicam genuine ebony handle. The 110 also features Buck's famed lockback safety system and includes a black leather sheath.

www.buckknives.com

**BUCK KNIVES 657 PURSUIT PRO LARGE GUTHOOK**

True to Buck Knives' words, today's knife are the products of third- and fourth-generation innovations, and a great example of such focus is found in the 657 Pursuit Pro large Guthook model. Perfect for field dressing and skinning, the Pursuit Pro Knife measures 9.5 inches and features a full tang; 4.5-inch S35VN steel blade, heat treated using Paul Bos' famed, proprietary process; and a hunter-orange and black, Versaflex glass-filled nylon handle with slip-resistant texturing. A razor-sharp guthook, positioned at forward edge of the blade's spine, makes opening a game animal's body cavity easy and prevents puncturing oranges in the process. The American-made Buck 657 Pursuit Pro Large Guthook Knife also includes a heavy-duty, black nylon sheath. If your hunting customers are looking for a quality knife capable of processing game from the field to the table, the Buck Pursuit Pro is a solid choice.

www.buckknives.com

**KNIVES OF ALASKA ELK HUNTER**

Knives of Alaska (KOA) was founded in 1993 by renowned Alaska Master Big Game Guide Charles Allen. Of course, he lives part-time in Texas, a bit of a curveball in the company name, since KOA products are actually made in the Lone Star State. Alaska, however, is not left in the cold. Allen still owns and manages his hunting and fishing lodge, Alaska Expeditions. Deep in Alaska's remote, often brutal wilderness, Alaska Expeditions is the perfect testing and proving ground for KOA knives, including a couple of KOA's most popular models, the Elk Hunter and the Whitetail Hunter.

A KOA favorite, the Elk Hunter has been the decades-long tool of choice for serious big game hunters. The Elk Hunter boasts a 3.25-inch drop-point blade constructed of D2 steel and a blade bevel of 18-20 degrees, perfect for field-



dressing as well as skinning. The textured polymer grip provides slip-resistant peace of mind even in wet hands, and the nearly 8.5-inch combination of grip and blade delivers exceptional balance. www.knivesofalaska.com

KNIVES OF ALASKA WHITETAIL HUNTER

When it comes to getting what a customer pays for, Knives of Alaska products certainly make the cut. Like the Elk Hunter and true to its name, the Knives of Alaska Whitetail Hunter has been field-proven to make short field-dressing work of whitetail deer and virtually all other game animals roaming our wild places. The Whitetail Hunter features a 3.25-inch drop-point blade and guthook constructed of D2 steel. A slip-resistant, layered polymer handle rounds out this well-balanced, heirloom-quality, fixed-blade hunting knife. www.knivesofalaska.com

OKC OLD HICKORY OUTDOOR FOLDER

Since its founding in 1889, Ontario Knife Company has been making award-winning knives and tools for generations of outdoorsmen and women. For 2022, a classic Old Hickory knife gets an upgrade in the form of the new Old Hickory Outdoor Folder. It has a slip joint, 2.9-inch, high carbon steel blade with a hardness rating of 56-58 HRC. The blade's drop-point shape makes it perfect for most any task, whether you're cleaning trout along the side of the stream or cutting a piece of rope to help make a OKC. This is a classic knife with old-world craftsmanship and style – the kind of knife that looks and feels as though it could have been handed down from your grandfather yet is somehow still superbly sharp. And it's 100% made in the USA. www.ontarioknife.com





GERBER MYTH FIELD DRESS KIT

Founded in 1939, Gerber has dedicated more than 80 years to crafting bladed tools for all manner of outdoor enthusiasts. As a hunter, I have personally carried Gerbers through scores of hunting adventures and, where bang for your buck is in question, I have always found that quality and value far exceeded the expense. Even now, a Gerber caping knife remains, sheathed, in my pack. For field dressing, a solid choice for any hunter looking for surgical cutting performance, a blade that keeps a great edge, and a lifetime warranty is the Gerber Myth Field Dress Kit.

The Myth Field Dress Kit is a two-knife system consisting of the Gerber Myth Fixed Blade Pro and a Myth Compact Fixed Blade. The Myth Fixed Blade Pro features a 3.75-inch drop-point blade with an integrated guthook and is perfect for primary field-dressing cuts on larger animals. The smaller, thinner Compact Fixed Blade Knife includes a slim-profile, 3.25-inch blade, ideal for detailed tasks. The Compact Fixed Blade Knife also is ideal for cleaning smaller game and birds. Both knives feature molded, textured, slip-resistant handles and store in a rugged plastic case with a built-in sharpener. www.gerbergear.com



GERBER FREEMAN GUIDE FOLDER

Another great Gerber value, perfect for nearly any customer's budget, is the Freeman Guide Folding Knife. At its price point, customers would be hard pressed to find better knife performance and reliability. The Freeman Guide Folder includes the kind of creature comforts more readily found on premium priced blades, such as a stainless steel 4-inch drop-point blade with a razor-sharp guthook machined into the spine. For compact carry, the blade folds into a TacHide rubber-overmolded, slip-resistant grip, complete with finger grooves. For safety and security, the folding system includes a liner-lock system, while the back edge of the grip houses a lanyard slot. Open, the Freeman Guide Folder measures just over 8 inches and weighs just 6.6 ounces. Closed, the knife stores in a durable nylon sheath. For hunters looking for a value-priced hunting knife they can depend on, the Freeman Guide Folder also includes a lifetime warranty. Seriously, where is the bad news here? There is none. www.gerbergear.com



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How to Partner With Other Businesses

You can make the most of your marketing dollars by teaming up with a local business — and they don't even have to be in the hunting space at all.

BY ACE LUCIANO

Post-pandemic, the world as we know it has changed, and many businesses have found they needed to make sometimes dramatic changes in order to continue. The only good news in the gun industry is that the pandemic was very good for gun and ammo sales, if inventory was available.

If your business benefited from the demands of the past couple of years, you may be looking for additional ways to utilize your windfall marketing dollars. Perhaps you're at the other end of the spectrum and need some new ideas to make up for some lost revenue. Either way, some of the following ideas will help you.



Co-Op Advertising and Marketing

Co-op advertising refers typically to a manufacturer offering advertising dollars to a retailer in support of selling their products. There are many companies in the firearms and outdoor industry that offer co-op dollars, but not all of them widely broadcast it. Some only offer it to their largest dealers or distributors. It is well worth your time to contact your sales representatives to see if there is any co-op budget available for your business. You should also pay attention to other business advertising that features prominent logos of products that you sell in their advertising. This can be a tip off to available co-op dollars.

One of the easiest ways to increase the power and amount of your marketing dollars is to partner with another business. This business can be in or out of your main focus, and this strategy can work well on both a local and a national level.

→ Whether it's Mario or Minions, co-marketing with McDonald's is a key to huge success for many brands. There's no reason you can't imitate these promos to the same effect.



Cooperative or co-op marketing is a marketing strategy where brands or organizations partner together to expand their reach. Typically, the companies working with each other have some similarities, such as being in the same industry or having similar audiences.

You've probably seen this many times, but may or may not have realized it.

Likely the largest and most prominent example of this is the McDonald's Happy Meal. The toys included are often from a popular movie, TV show or book series. McDonald's' global juggernaut presence

↑ Car dealerships offer free oil changes or other promos — even giving away a gun or a diamond necklace with a purchase.

and marketing machine adds tremendously to the reach of whoever their partner is.

On a local (and much simpler, but highly non-specific) level is the bulletin board you see in your local cafe or gas station full of local business cards. Here, you'll typically find everything from roofers to realtors to beauty salons to local baseball teams.

Maybe you've seen advertisements for other local businesses on a restaurant's menu.

The local bar "co-markets" with the local softball league by sponsoring one of the teams that play in it.

"Money Mailer" advertising has



made an entire business of this concept, selling advertising space to multiple local businesses and sending them to every local resident in the same envelope.

Some other great examples:

- ▶ Free pizza with tree removal estimate.
- ▶ Half-price oil change with every \$100 restaurant gift certificate.
- ▶ Dinner at a local restaurant up to \$25 with every tax return.

Consider sharing the cost of a direct mail campaign by including another business on a postcard, or allowing them to include a letter or item in a mailer you're sending. Also consider list sharing, where you and a business you've partnered with both send advertisements to your respective lists.

Many business owners in the outdoor space may look at this concept and think, "Sure, that works for a beauty parlor or repair shop, but my business is different."

There's another huge lesson for you here, and that is that your business is composed of only two things: sales and marketing your business to make more sales. That's it.

It doesn't matter if you're a plumber, a restaurateur, a repair shop or a hunting-gear-focused retailer. Your businesses are, at the root, all the same. They simply differ in the products and services that they sell.

A smart businessperson will look at these examples and adapt them to their own business to great success.

Tips for Co-Marketing Success

While the concept of co-marketing seems simple, the execution will be made much easier by making sure you follow some of the following rules of the road.

1. When approaching potential partners, and especially those whom you don't have an existing relationship with, make sure you let them know right away what's in it for them. For example, say you went to

↑ Try partnering with local restaurants or entertainment venues for gift-certificate trade-outs or other promotions.

a local restaurant for your co-marketing project. Offer to buy a large number of gift certificates at a discount in exchange for giving them to your customers with a certain purchase level. Explain that you will be using this promotion in your advertising, benefitting them again by promoting their business with something like, "Buy your gun at Bill's Outdoors instead of the big box and

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enjoy dinner at the best steakhouse in Janesville-The Red Ox."

2. Set the expectation that you will lead-share all of the customers that take advantage with their contact information in order for them to

follow up with an offer or other option of contact, and make sure you follow through. Your strategy won't work well unless both parties stick to it. While you're at it, ensure you have a solid partnership by creating a written agreement at the very beginning of your venture. This way, you have something to turn to if any miscommunications take place.

Some things you may want to list in your agreement:

- ▶ Goals
- ▶ Topics
- ▶ Timelines
- ▶ Promotional plans
- ▶ Reporting plans
- ▶ Content and asset ownership

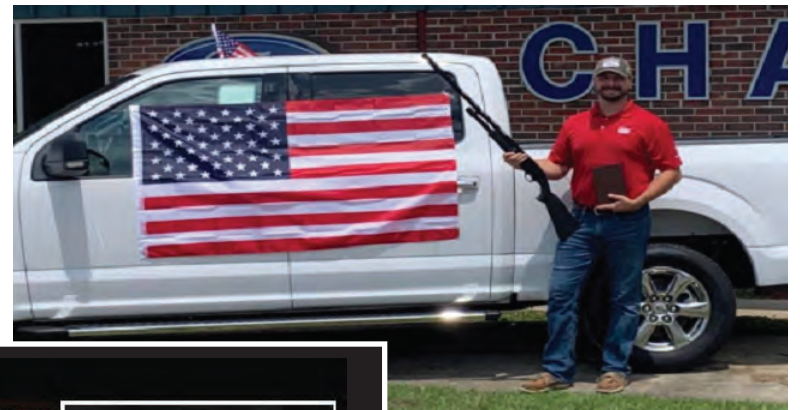
(for example, can you use each other's ads?)

▶ Where any agreed content will be shared, hosted or placed

▶ Anything off-limits — for example, some businesses might not want to be branded with firearms,

business with anyone but you. A good indicator of an irresistible offer is that it makes you at least a little uncomfortable to offer it. Rather than 5% or 10% off, offer 25% off as a minimum — and no jacking up prices or offering it off of MSRP. Everyone knows that's not a good deal, and this will actually hurt your campaign and, possibly, your business. The same should go for your partner. I ran a campaign once for a Midwest pizza chain that offered a free, no-strings-attached (except for their name, address, cell phone number, and email) free pizza sent to anyone that had moved into the area. It worked so well that they tried to figure ways to give away even more pizza for free whenever

↓ This car dealership gave away a free shotgun with every purchase. Can you team up with a local dealership for something similar?



and however they could.

4. Set a meeting to discuss the results.

This can be the most important part of the process, because it provides proof-of-concept to your marketing partners and further deepens your business relationship — something that can lead to even more and better opportunities in the future.

Like many skills, the more you practice co-marketing, the better you will be at finding excellent partners and executing campaigns, as well as finding others that are aligned with your business growth goals and open to new ideas. **HR**



7 Steps to a Better Online Reputation

When it comes to online reputation, no one can do as much damage to your company as you can do yourself. Take steps to improve how your business is perceived.

BY JUDY KNEISZEL

So much depends on what pops up on a screen when a potential customer types your name or company name into a search engine or mentions it to Siri. The first thing someone sees after they click can make the difference between giving you business or taking it to another store. Make sure they like what they see by taking steps to give your online reputation a checkup and possibly a makeover.

1. Analyze. Type your name into a search engine, and note what comes up and how the order mentions of your name come up. Do the same for your company name. Also search “sporting goods stores” and your city name to see how high up your store is listed. If you find negative comments or bad reviews, or come up low on the page when searched, make note of these and any other things you would like to correct, answer to, or eliminate.

2. Consider a social media diet. The number of platforms is growing every day, and while throwing everything at the wall to see what sticks is a popular marketing strategy, you’ll have more control over your online reputation if you limit yourself to the platforms you’re comfortable with that get the best results. Maybe you get a lot of traffic on Facebook but are ignored on Twitter, or vice versa. It’s OK to delete a stagnant account, and it’s actually better than leaving it ignored and vulnerable to negative comments that might sit for months

because you don’t have time to keep up with every platform. If you decide to delete an account, make sure to also delete any connecting links on your webpage and email signature.

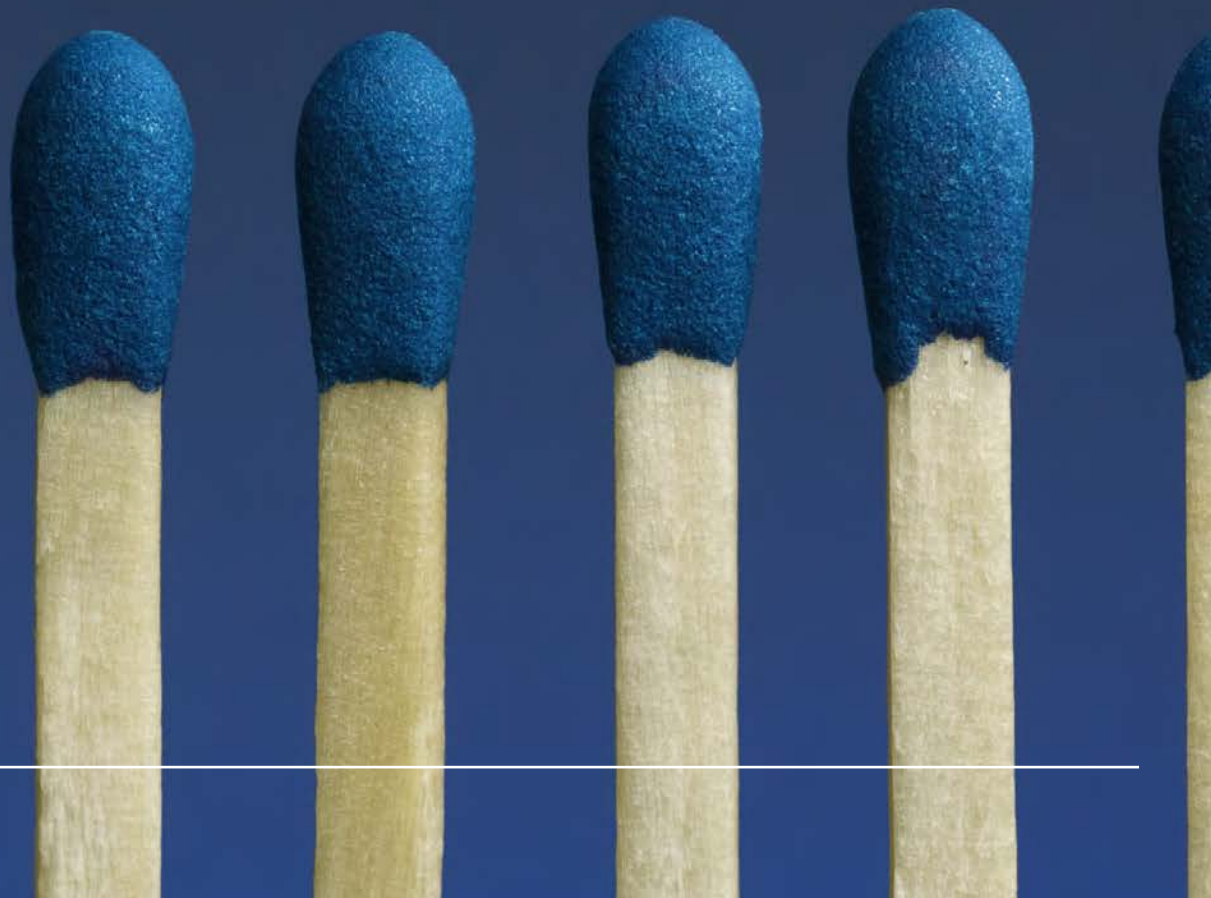
3. Respond to negativity positively. If someone posted a negative comment or review of your company, address it head on. If you were wrong or someone in the company made a mistake, admit it, apologize, and move on. If there are so many complaints you notice a pattern emerging, you need to fix the root cause, explain how it was


fixed, apologize, and move on. If, however, a comment or complaint is inappropriate or completely unwarranted, you may want to delete it and block the poster. No matter how badly you want to set some complaining jerk straight, do not get into an argument on a social media site. Arguing will only draw more attention to the situation, and even if you’re right, you’re likely to end up looking bad.

4. Be proactive. Sometimes the best defense is a good offense. If you anticipate negative comments after a price hike, for example, get

out in front of it and write a detailed explanation justifying the increase before anyone has a chance to complain. Get them to see your side of the story and they are less likely to publicly grumble.

5. Review your website. While your social media sites are important, don’t forget your website. Check for dead links. Make sure everything on it is still accurate and that it loads quickly on all devices. A tired, dated website that doesn’t fit on a smartphone screen and takes forever to load tells potential customers you’re not on top of things.





You don't want a reputation, online or otherwise, for being lazy.

6. Assess your professionalism.

If you Google your name and the first thing that comes up is bathroom humor, political pontificating, or a picture of yourself dancing with a lampshade on your head at the company Christmas party, it's time to clean up your online image. You maintain a professional image in the store by dressing properly and keeping the place clean — and the same should be true for your online presence. Keep it clean and professional at all times. And in this age of political divisiveness, why risk alienating 50 percent of your potential customers by spouting political rhetoric online?

7. Get help if necessary. There are companies that, for a fee, provide reputation management services. If you are facing an online reputation crisis requiring more time and expertise than you or your staff have to devote to the problem, outside help may be part of the solution. Some of these services simply offer tools you can set to monitor review sites, social media sites and search engine results for mentions of your company. Others provide

managed assistance. The trouble is, it's hard to predict how much it will cost to have an outside service attempt to fix your online reputation and if they can actually deliver results.

There are individual self-proclaimed experts who send out email blasts or advertise on Craigslist promising to fix your online reputation for a few hundred dollars. On the other side of the spectrum, there are large agencies specializing in reputation management that charge thousands of dollars or more each month for their services. If your online reputation is so damaged it's beyond your ability to repair and you need professional help, shop around, ask trusted associates for recommendations, and hire a firm with a proven track record of results.

Keep it Clean

Like it or not, the internet is the first place most people turn when shopping for the services your company provides. Make sure they like what they see when your company or personal website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, blog or other social media content pops up. Just like you wouldn't show up for a meeting with a wholesaler in a dirty shirt, don't show up on a customer's smartphone with an offensive comment. Every footprint you leave online should lead one to the conclusion that you and your company can be trusted to provide top-notch professional service. **HR**



How to Sell More Binoculars and Rangefinders

Selling optics is all about knowing what a shopper needs — and what they don't.





BY ALAN CLEMONS

Hunters want functional simplicity with their tools. They want bows that draw cleanly and broadheads that kill quickly. Guns that cycle smoothly and shoot well. Clothing and boots that conceal while providing warmth and comfort. Game cameras that send clear images or video.

Optics? Yes, hunters want rangefinders and optics — binoculars, traditional riflescopes, red-dot optics and spotting scopes — for everything from squirrel hunting to pursuing elk in the Rockies. They want these optics to function without fail in any weather conditions (despite maybe being banged around), provide instant and accurate feedback, and not cost an arm and a leg.

Not all hunters are like that, of course. As with anything, you'll get a mix, from "I just need something decent" to "I want the best, take all my money." Selling optics isn't easy because of that gamut. You can stock the most popular ammunition or broadheads, or rifles from a couple of companies. Clothing, of course. But selling binoculars and rangefinders, which we'll stick with for this overlook, are among the most reliable sellers for the hunting optics category.





Rangefinders provide readings of distance in yards or meters. They have come a long, long way from the first models. Today's rangefinders are lighter and tougher, they read farther and better in different conditions, and they range in prices from less than \$100 to more than \$1,600. With that price range, of course, comes the difference in amenities. This is what you have to clearly explain to a customer without making it sound like buying the \$100 is a waste of money. It may be all he or she can afford. Point out the features and perhaps nudge toward the \$150 model as a possibility.

A solid binocular gives hunters a host of opportunities in the field or stand. I can't remember the make of my first binocular more than 40 years ago. It likely was a Bushnell or Tasco, one that my father used for deer hunting. But it opened my eyes to what was out there. Since then I've used binoculars for everything from covering college football and NASCAR races in press boxes to counting antler tines on bucks in Kansas. In blinds from Canada to Texas I've watched innumerable birds, which I enjoy seeing.

Although your customers will seek them for hunting, they're invaluable for numerous activities. Binoculars are a gateway for youngsters, too.

Technology

Technology is great when it works, and it's coming harder into the hunting scene. Some older hunters may eschew technological improvements in optics, such as Bluetooth pairing of scopes, rangefinders and binoculars and phone app. Combining the trio, or at least two of those, with the app can open the doors to more accurate shooting and cleaner kills.

That is a big selling point. Middle- and younger-age hunters likely are more in tune with phone apps and Bluetooth connections to optics. The app holds data about the rifle caliber and ammunition; pairing the rangefinder, scope and binocular helps the hunter know the correct hold. Sig Sauer's Ballistic Data Xchange system is one option, as

→ Price isn't always a guaranteed indicator of quality, but budget is a factor for everyone. Encourage shoppers to look through a variety of optics in their price range.

is the Leica Rangefinder CRF 3500 and the ATN Auxiliary Ballistic Laser ABL Smart Rangefinder 1500 with Bluetooth. If your shoppers are looking at night-vision or thermal optics for hunting hogs, coyotes or other predators at night as well as during daylight hours, easy-to-use models are available from Sellmark, ATN and others, and these are gaining serious traction in the hunting community. These higher-tech options are not difficult to explain.

↑ Ask a hunter his or her intended use for binos they're buying. Spot-and-stalk hunters will have different needs from treestand sitters.

Sell the technology as well as the traditional optics. Buyers can have the best of both worlds.

Price, Performance

I've been fortunate over the years to try rangefinders and binoculars





↑ Rangefinders are better than ever, but be sure you know how far your customer intends to range before he or she picks out a model.

with a wide range of price points. I currently have a Halo rangefinder that is quite affordable and gets the job done nicely for bowhunting. Distances for shots within 40 yards are no problem. Distances to 100 or more for timing or fun guessing, also no problem. Will it range to 1,500 yards accurately? No. That's when the Sig Sauer Kilo, Leupold RX 2800, Bushnell Prime 1700, Vortex Crossfire HD or other more expensive models come into play for stalking or rifle work.

“Sell the technology as well as the traditional optics. Buyers can have the best of both worlds.”

With binoculars, consumers often will shop based on size. Some will believe the 8x32 or “small” binocular just isn't good enough, and they need 10x42 or even 10x50. The latter likely would be overkill, though, for their close-quarter bow and crossbow shots, and possibly even for rifle hunting unless they frequent the Midwest or Rockies. Definitely ask those questions when someone is shopping for binoculars. Where will you be hunting, and for what?

What kind of habitat and terrain? Southern hardwoods or Rockies vistas? A deer hunter in a Midwest corn field might benefit from 10x50 if he or she doesn't mind the weight

(and price). But that same hunter would find those to be overkill in central Wisconsin, where the 10x42 or smaller could get the job done.

Personally, I prefer the 10x42 as a good, all-around bino for how and where I hunt. That means the binocular has a 10X magnification, compared to your naked eye, and an objective diameter of 42mm. Knowing these sizes and what they mean is a helpful selling point. You can explain that 10x50 offers a greater objective diameter and usually more clarity with depth of field. But with that comes added weight, size and price. The 10x50 is super for open country and glassing for movement. If my hunting areas required more power, I'd go with that size.



Find out how committed your buyers are to what they need vs. what they want, and steer them to the right products. Lower and moderate prices will attract the largest group of buyers. Higher-priced optics will appeal to those who believe they get what they pay for and want the best. Optics have similarities with firearms and bows; flagships and mid-priced items sell, but you'll also have new hunters or those on tight budgets. Familiar names such as Bushnell, Leupold, GPO, Vortex and others offer a variety of attractive price points. Your challenge is to know the customer base and plan, stock and learn accordingly.

Combo Optics

More than a few years ago I was fortunate to get a then-new binocular with a built-in rangefinder. Whoohoo, that was some kind of fancy. But it was large and bulky. It was quite heavy. I used it only a few times. Today, however, binoculars with built-in rangefinders are far superior in power, performance and construction. They still are a bit bigger and heavier than a regular binocular; the addition of the range-finding “guts” and buttons adds a smidge of weight. But they're quite nice, and customers definitely will ask about them. It removes one step in the process for hunters to spy a buck, elk, moose or pronghorn, determine the range and decide to shoot or pass.

These customers seeking the combo optics often will be, most likely, your top-end buyers who don't wince when looking at the Swarovski EL Range, Zeiss Victory RF or Leica Geovid Pro. One mid-range combo option is the Bushnell Fusion X, at about half the price of those other three. That's an affordable option with good glass for hunters in any part of the country.

Avoid Mumbo-Jumbo

Marketing buzz litters the descriptions of optics. Companies overwhelm consumers with descriptions of glass, angles, data and more. Years ago “Schott glass” was the



rage to name-drop into marketing content. It was billed as the best and clearest, or having the most clarity, or this or that. It may have been all that; the glass is top quality. But the buzz all came without mentioning that Schott AG is owned by the Carl Zeiss Foundation. Companies didn't want to mention that a competitor was the source of their optical glass. It doesn't matter that only a few top-tier optical manufacturers exist worldwide; consumers only saw the clever writing from marketing. Nothing new, of course.

You, however, should avoid the mumbo-jumbo when selling optics or anything else. Consumers see through the BS pretty quickly. They'll turn on their internal "ignore" mode if you begin overwhelming them with fancy terms, the names of multiple coatings on prisms or lenses and other hype. Honestly is the best policy. Mention that the glass has multiple coatings

to reduce glare and improve vivid colors; if they want to know more, dive in. But trying to impress with the marketing terms you maybe don't even understand could curtail a sale. Keep it simple.

Extras May Help

History and brand awareness are eye-catchers, of course, but unless someone is extremely brand-loyal, they will seek the best tools for their task. Hunting optics are a big investment; customers will be more circumspect before buying. You're not going to put a Swarovski EL or Sig KILO 8000 by the register to make an impulse sale.

Binoculars and rangefinders may come with goodies: lens caps, soft neoprene bags, straps, loops, cleaning cloths, perhaps a decal. These all are nice, but the real extra is the warranty. Note the warranty — GPO offers its Spectacular Lifetime Warranty, for example,



that is outstanding. It's for a lifetime, fully transferrable, with no warranty card registration or proof of purchase required. It has some stipulations but is fairly compre-

hensive. Other brands have similar warranties, while some are less generous. This is a nice way to add to the conversation and, perhaps, close the sale. **HR**



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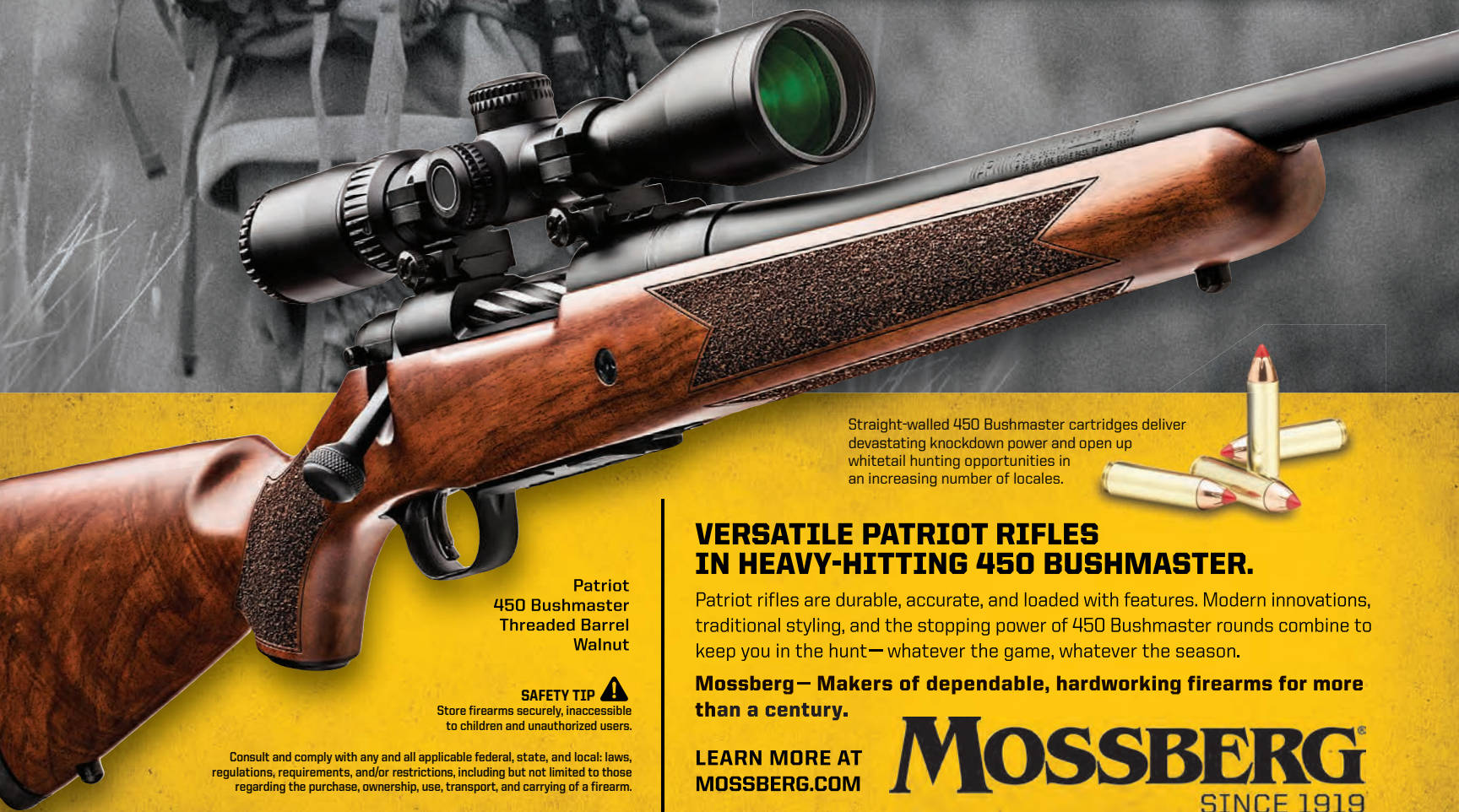
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Build Your DIY Bolt-Action Inventory

Customers looking to build their own precision guns for long-range hunting or shooting will need a specific set of components.

BY KEVIN REESE

"Send it." Scott McRee's voice rose above the range chatter as he peered through his spotter. I was on the rifle, a McRees Precision BR-10 chambered in 6mm Creedmoor, a rig I had built under his mentorship just a day earlier.

"BRASS. Breathe, relax, aim, stop and squeeze," I recalled to myself as I settled down and proceeded through the sequence. I was low and right. He called out corrections and I responded, "Hold over or turret adjustments?"

"Just adjust your turrets."

His reply marked the beginning of the end for me. "My turrets are MOA."

He quipped back, "I thought you told me earlier your scope was mil (milliradian/mrad)."

"Well, my reticle is mil but my turrets are MOA." My first lesson was abundantly clear even before his next response.

"What the hell kind of scope is that?"

He was right, the scope made zero sense, and this was part of my learning process. I learned firsthand what happens when you choose the wrong tool for the job; in this case, the optic was my undoing.



Many years later, with those initial lessons learned and a new addiction ignited, I've spent quite a bit of time on scores of shooting ranges either behind the spotter or on a rifle, gathering DOPE, testing equipment and banging steel out beyond a mile. A side effect to catching the long-range bug is rifle building. Over the years, I have built quite a few rifles — heavy precision rifles with bull barrels, mid-weight projects pulling double duty as long-range and hunting rifles, and lightweight rigs for hunting but without compromising on dead-nuts-on accuracy. Depending on cartridges, I am generally focused on projects capable of ¼-MOA grouping at 100 yards.

With ¼-MOA groups as a starting point, I look for ½-MOA to 1-MOA groups at much longer distances, but I am also a realist: The caliber I choose certainly dictates my expectations on the back end of its ballistic capabilities. As examples

and keeping caliber choices pared down what is most readily available, I have good faith in the ballistic performances of the 300 PRC for 2,000 yards, .300 Win. Mag and 6.5 PRC out to 1,800 yards, 6.5 Creedmoor to 1,500 yards, .308 Win. for 1,000 yards, etc. Yes, I understand some may take these cartridges a bit further, while many more have never shot those distances at all.

That said, seasoned veterans and less experienced shooters alike who have been bitten by the long-range shooting bug all have something in common. They all want to buy or build something that extends their game and tightens their groups; something that outperforms expectations or even takes up some slack in their fundamental shooting game. Let's face it: A shooter learning or honing precise shooting fundamentals doesn't need questionable components getting in the way. Moreover, shooters seeking advice

from retailers should be able to look to YOU as somebody armed with solid, performance-enhancing suggestions as they navigate through firearm or DIY building options.

The latter, as a subject well worth the chatter, is a critical junction of knowledge (retailer) and trust (customer). Great advice from a retailer to a consumer, with positive range results post-project, often result in years-long loyalty and repeated sales. Long-range hunters and shooters who build almost always start other projects, and your advice, along with carrying the right components, ensures they come to you for both repeatedly. As such, it's important to learn about premium components and their purposes and about precision shooting in general. Equally as important, retailers interested in servicing the growing precision-shooting community should carry a wealth of products — enough to complete DIY rifle builds.

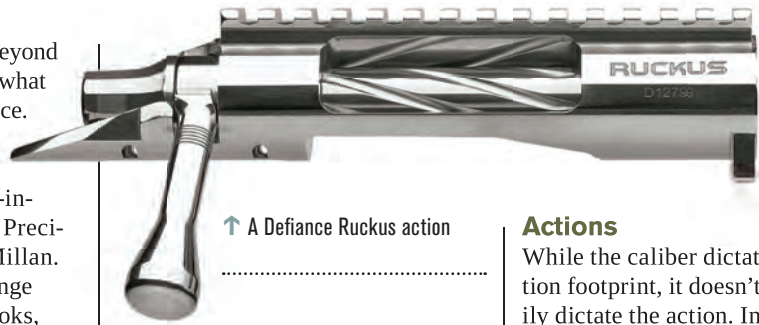
Bolt-Action Rifle Projects

While AR-platform rifles have gained quite a bit of traction in long-distance accuracy, bolt-action rigs still rule the long-range roost and are the focus of this article. Bolt-action rifle options are exponentially more varied than just a decade ago, and the trends of ultra-cool match-grade systems and DIY projects show no signs of slowing down. Additionally, where the 1,000-Yard Club has always been viewed as elite, that distance continues to extend. Today, the 1-Mile Club is much more appetizing for shooters residing in areas where such distances can be accommodated; in fact, most members of the 1,000-Yard Club want in. Naturally, hunters aren't going to be shooting game at these distances, but they might wish to practice at them at the range in order to extend their own hunting range to something beyond their normal 200 yards. A mile



is the new talk of the town, and some shooters are itching to get well beyond that. This is where purpose-driven really comes into play. Understand what your customer wants to accomplish and deliver parts that go the distance.

Depending on purposes and, yes, aesthetics — what pleases a consumer's eye without deviating from purpose — stocks are the bones of the build; the foundation. Many shooters definitely want a tactical-inspired, precision-machined aluminum stock like those from McRees Precision, while others may opt for composite stocks like those from McMillan. Many want nods to heirloom-quality beauty under other extended-range components. For those folks, there is no denying the jaw-dropping looks, fit, form and function of John-Kyle Truitt's insanely stunning Foundation Stocks. While Foundation stocks are machined from micarta, they certainly have the look of heirloom-quality exotic woods and cuts. A Founda-



↑ A Defiance Ruckus action

Actions

While the caliber dictates the action footprint, it doesn't necessarily dictate the action. Indeed, the Remington 700 footprint and Remington 700 actions still rank among the most popular; however, many demanding long-range shooters look for more than the tried-and-true, even battle-proven action. Retailers certainly should offer Remington 700 short actions (SA), long actions (LA) and the same in magnums, but they should also offer grade actions. A great mid- to top-range offering is Gunwerks' GB8 action.

Some top-shelf actions definitely worth carrying include Falkor 7Even (SA) and 7Even+ (LA) actions, Kelbly Black Bear and Atlas action LA and SA actions, and Defiance SA, LA and proprietary intermediate actions. To be true, Defiance has built quite a reputation for world-class actions. Recently, I completed two projects, a .300 PRC and 6.5 PRC using Defiance Ruckus actions — again, one with the Foundation Revelation Stock at the hands of world-class Boring Rifles builder Karston Davis. Combined with the barrels and triggers, I easily achieved ¼-MOA results, and both rifles have performed well out to 1,800 to 2,000 yards. All said, the action you suggest should always complement your customer's choice of stock, caliber and budget.

Defiance actions are based on Remington 700 (R-700) footprints and are offered in the popular long and short formats, as well as a proprietary intermediate length.



tion stock will catch your eye every time, but its overarching purpose is to complement other components for next-level, surgically precise accuracy. As a point of interest, I undertook a 6.5 PRC project with master-craftsman Karston Davis at Boring Rifles, using one of Truitt's prized Foundation Revelation stocks. It will be passed on to my son.

Woox also offers a unique mix of heirloom hunting stock meets next-level match function. The wood components contrasted with black receivers are striking, and Woox stocks most definitely are employed by many next-level shooters. Boyd stocks also are great options and are most often found at a lower price point while continuing to offer exceptional performance as the foundation of a precision rifle build. Boyd's At-One stock is quite a looker and a sound choice for cost-conscious consumers.

Of course, stock choices are based on actions, which are based on calibers. New shooters or builders may need a little help determining the best caliber for their project. As a general rule, basic options are long or short

actions and magnums or non-magnums. A .308 Winchester and 6.5 Creedmoor are short actions; a 6.5 PRC is a magnum fitting both short (with a slight modification) and long actions. A .300 Win. Mag, .300 PRC, etc. fit long-action magnum actions. Calibers like .270 Winchester and .30-06 are non-magnum options for long actions. Most bolt-action chassis and stock producers accommodate Remington-700-footprint actions, while some also accommodate Savage, Tikka, Sako, Kelbly and a handful of others.



↑ A Foundation Revelation stock





← The 1,000-Yard Club is still a baseline, but these days, more and more shooters are stretching out to the 1-Mile Club.

↓ Hawkins M5 bottom metal

Currently, Defiance offers Deviant, Deviant Elite, Rebel, anTi, anTi X, Tenacity and Ruckus actions. The Ruckus was my model of choice for both PRC projects, and their quality and performance cannot be overstated — I’m a fan. Their action sizes are: Medium (SA), XM (intermediate) and Long (LA). The Rebel includes XL with a .750 bolt face for large calibers like .338 Lapua.

Barrels

First and foremost, all barrels are NOT the same. As much as the stock/chassis and action, the barrel is purpose-driven. Terms like length, twist, weight, tapering (bull, palma, etc.), etc. are tossed around quite a bit, and for good reason — they matter. I’ll avoid the barrel manufacturer infighting here with respect to rifling, etc. here — a topic for another day — and stick to what I know has worked over the years.

Regardless of manufacturer, accuracy is the goal; however, some definitely perform better than others, and the competition remains a reputation and get-what-you-pay-for game. For larger production, it’s tough to beat the proven performance of world-renowned stainless-steel barrels from the likes of Bergara, Bartlein, Shilen, Pac-Nor or Criterion.

When it comes to lighter weight and precise accuracy, BSF carbon-fiber-jacketed barrels are well worth every single one of your customers’ pennies. They are currently found on Weatherby CarbonMark and Springfield Waypoint rifles — great testaments to the barrel manufacturer’s rock-solid reputation. Helix 6 barrels also offer world-class accuracy and should be considered as a stocked item, and Boring Rifles is now offering a top-tier, carbon-fiber, match barrel. My prototype testing produced sub-¼-MOA results using little more than a squeeze bag, bipod and good glass. Of course, there is no denying the accuracy and

popularity of Proof carbon-fiber barrels. All of the aforementioned are well worth stocking and sure to give your customers considerable bang for their hard-earned bucks.

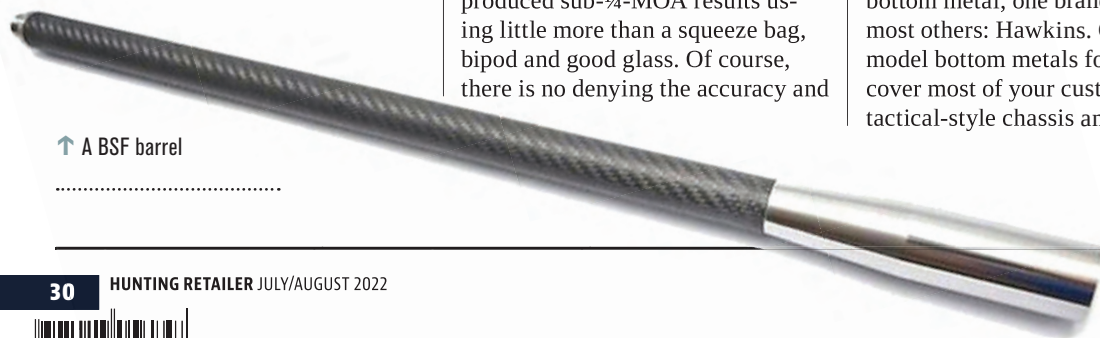
As a starting point in my own projects, I prefer 24-inch barrels for short actions like .308 and 6.5 Creedmoor and a longer 26-inch barrel for a short (or long) action magnum like the 6.5 PRC, as well as other .30-caliber LA magnums like the .300 Win. Mag. and .300 PRC. That is to say match-grade rifle barrels running 24 to 26 inches chambered in popular precision shooting calibers should be a great start for your inventory.

Bottom Metal

Bottom metal is the metal component, often including a magazine well and trigger guard, mounted underneath the rifle stock. Determining which bottom metal to stock means understanding basic differences. ADL bottom metal features a trigger guard and hidden magazine and is top-loaded through the action. A BDL action includes a spring-loaded magazine accessed through a hinged floorplate. DBM stands for “detachable box magazine” and is essentially composed of an open magazine well and trigger guard. The latter is the most popular among shooters looking for increased ammo capacity — PRS competitors are a great example. When it comes to bottom metal, one brand sticks out with quality and reliability more than most others: Hawkins. Consider offering Hawkins DBM and Oberndorf model bottom metals for Remington 700 short- and long-action projects to cover most of your customers’ projects. Keep in mind that most machined, tactical-style chassis and stocks do not require bottom metal.



↑ A BSF barrel





↑ Timney HIT trigger

Triggers

Triggers can quite subjective and, like other components, are purpose-driven. Considering carrying popular match triggers with reputations for light, crisp breaks — adjustable is even better. For more recent build projects, my preferred bolt-action

triggers have been Timney's HIT and Calvin Elite triggers. My latest HIT trigger is set at just 8 ounces, while my Calvin Elite is running at roughly 1.5 pounds. The Trigger Tech Diamond Trigger also is a top choice with demanding shooters. Along with Timney and Trigger Tech, Bix'N Andy's TacSport PRO is worth considering for shelf space.

Scope Bases

The vast majority of precision shooters are employing 0-MOA or 20-MOA picatinny-style scope bases. Shooting at 1,000 yards or less, either scope base is fine. Shooters engaging targets between 1,000 and 2,000 yards should definitely employ a 20-MOA base. With Remington 700 actions as the most popular, the bare minimum scope bases a retailer should offer to premium rifle builders are 0-MOA and 20-MOA, Remington 700 short- and long-action configurations.



A Final Note on DIY Bolt-Action Rifle Builds

The most complicated part of any bolt-action building project is assembling the action and barrel. In assembling the barrel and action, headspace is absolutely vital. Improper headspacing can create bolt-cycling issues at best, and at worst, can be incredibly dangerous for the shooter. Definitely consider offering headspace gauges for confident, hardcore builders. At the same time, offering barrel and action assembly, along with professional headspacing, takes a huge weight off the shoulders of your DIY customers. **HR**

↑ Offer 20-MOA scope bases (like this one) as well as 0-MOA Remington 700 short- and long-action configurations.



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Brush Busters

Take a gander at these upland hunting pants and chaps.



BY MARK CHESNUT

While upland bird hunting has fallen in popularity over the past few decades, there are still millions of stalwart hunters who each year strap on their boots, load up their shotguns and release their gun dogs in pursuit of any of a couple dozen different bird species spread across the United States. From ruffed grouse in Michigan's Upper Peninsula to ring-necked pheasants in western Kansas to chukars way out West, there are avid

hunters willing to do whatever it takes to pursue their favorite quarry — including spending plenty of money on gear along the way.

One interesting aspect of hunting birds for most species is the thick cover they often inhabit — especially when receiving lots of hunting pressure during the open season. Many upland species live on the edges between open ground and thick cover, and when they retreat to that cover, it can cause a hunter to go through jeans faster and lose more blood than he or she would like.

Of course, the answer to that problem is easy to find. Brush pants and hunting chaps protect hunters from briars, plum thickets and a variety of other sticky, scratchy, pokey plants, allowing hunters to get into the thick stuff where birds are often hunted without shedding blood or ruining clothing. In fact, for hunting most upland species successfully and comfortably, good brush pants or chaps are nearly a necessity.

Note also that upland hunting pants and brush chaps aren't just for bird hunters. Many other types of hunters spend lots of time in thick brush, particularly rabbit and even hog hunters. Plus, many hound hunters who run raccoons at night wear such outer garments to protect themselves from cuts and scrapes when traipsing down brushy creek bottoms in the dark.

PANTS OR CHAPS?

While you might think choosing between upland pants or chaps is largely a matter of personal preference — and it is to some extent — both brush pants and chaps have their advantages and disadvantages. That's why I own and hunt with both, depending on the circumstances.

Upland brush pants are the real deal, created for comfort, protection, moisture wicking and a number of other aspects of hunting. During warmer weather, upland pants allow you to stay cooler by having one single layer, compared to two layers when wearing chaps over jeans. Many models also look great, and it can be a source of pride to wear them into a convenience store for an early morning cup of coffee and be welcomed by a conversation about bird hunting, thanks to your trousers.

When I'm going to be busting the brush for the entire day — or even for several straight days — I prefer upland pants. They're purpose-made for that activity and keep me comfortable, as well as protected, no matter how thick the cover.



BROWNING UPLAND CHAPS

Chaps, on the other hand, are great for times when you're just going to make a quick jaunt to a bobwhite honeyhole to try to get into a few coveys during a quick afternoon hunt. Slip them right on over your jeans, and you're good to go immediately with no fuss or muss.



FILSON DOUBLE TIN CHAPS

Chaps are also great for those who are in that life stage when constant weight gain is a problem. Since chaps don't have a waistband, you never have to worry about not being able to button them when you've spent a little extra time around the table at Thanksgiving dinner.

Also, when I'm going to be riding my horse, I prefer the chaps, as they don't bind up around the crotch and upper thighs when mounting and dismounting. They're also more handy than upland pants if you want to be able to run into a convenience store or restaurant without your wardrobe screaming, "I'm hunting today!" Simply slip them off and you're back to jeans or whatever other trousers you prefer.

For most hunters, chaps with a full-length zipper will serve their needs best. That's because when unzipped, you can slip them on and off without having to take off your boots in most cases. Shorter zippers often won't allow this, resulting in frustration when having to take boots on and off to put on and remove chaps.

You'll likely have customers who greatly prefer one over the other, which is why it's a good idea for retailers in areas with lots of bird hunters to carry a nice selection of both. Now, let's take a look at some specific upland hunting pants and chaps that hunting retailers might want to consider adding to their inventory.





UPLAND PANTS

When quality, fit and durability are important – and they definitely are when busting through the thick stuff in search of ruffies, ringnecks or scaled quail – many hunters turn to the Browning Upland Pant. These pants are made from rugged 10-ounce cotton for comfort and feature a water-resistant polyester overlay to protect hunters' legs from the biggest, toughest thorns. The four-pocket design of the pants gives hunters plenty of places to carry a pocket knife, some spare shotshells or any number of other gear items a person might need on the hunt. Plus, articulated knee darts aid in flexibility when getting up and down, and when getting in and out of a vehicle to move from one hunting hotspot to another.

The Gamehide Heavy Duty Briar Proof Upland Pants is another option preferred by many. The pants feature a reinforced seat and durable 10-ounce fabric. They also feature a heavy-duty hook and D ring for leashes, electronic collar controls or key rings. Two front slash pockets and a rear pocket protect your license and keys. All facings are waterproof coated 1000 denier nylon fabric. They're available in dark brown and marsh brown, giving bird hunters a bit of a fashion choice. Plus, they have a modest MSRP that nearly any bird hunter can afford.

At the higher priced end of the upland hunting pants spectrum are the Filson Shelter Cloth Brush Pants. These hunting pants are made of the storied company's 11-ounce Shelter Cloth, a tightly woven wax cotton so named because of its similarity to the durable tent fabric used by military troops back in the mid-1900s. This cloth ensures these pants are comfortable the very first hunt and stay that way throughout their lifetime. The overlay is oil-finish Shelter Cloth, and the pants feature a button fly and suspender buttons. While they might be pricey, these pants are about as good as you can get for the serious hunter who really hits the thick stuff on a regular basis.

FILSON SHELTER CLOTH BRUSH PANTS



BROWNING UPLAND PANT



GAMEHIDE HEAVY DUTY BRIAR PANT



GAMEHIDE HEAVY DUTY UPLAND CHAPS



HUNTING CHAPS

Browning brags that its Upland Chaps are made for fearless individuals who battle the nastiest brush to find birds, and if you look at how tough these chaps are, that's not a hard statement to believe. They're made of 12-ounce, 100% cotton canvas with a tough, briar-resistant overlay. They feature double-sized adjustment loops with hook-and-loop closure, alleviating the need for buckles. The side opening is held closed by a series of snaps, making them easy to put on and remove, even over boots. The main part of the chap is an attractive tan color, while the brush guard portion is a darker chocolate hue, making them look great as well as being quite functional.

Filson's Double Tin Chaps are made to bust thickets and thorny briars. They're made of two layers of heavy, 12.5-ounce cotton canvas combined with what Filson calls Oil Finish Tin Cloth. Each leg has two straps that slide under your belt (one on either side of the belt loop) to prevent the chaps from twisting. Plus, two snaps on each strap allow for very good length adjustment. The Double Tin Chaps also feature 13-inch zippers on the outside of each leg, with mud flaps that snap shut on both the inside and outside of the zipper.

The Heavy Duty Upland Chap from Gamehide is another fine brush-busting product preferred by many upland hunters. For added durability, the makers reinforced the fabric to mid-calf on back, and the front is faced with 1000 denier brush-busting, water-repellent coated fabric. Full-length leg zippers make these chaps very easy to put on and take off, and the cuffs feature a triple layer of material for long-time wear. Adjustable hip straps on each side keep the chaps in place and allow for easy length adjustment. The Heavy Duty Upland Chap is available in dark brown, marsh brown and upland green, all with a chocolate colored brush-buster layer.

Don't miss out on the dollars that avid upland bird hunters spend to chase their feathered quarry. Keep some pants and chaps in stock as these hunters begin gearing up for this fall's upland seasons.



THREE GREAT VESTS

There's more to upland hunting than just having a suitable lower garment. A good vest is worth its weight in gold for carrying shells, dead birds, e-collar handhelds and a variety of other pieces of gear. Here are three good ones to consider.

The Orvis Pro LT is a super lightweight bird-hunting vest that will serve hunters well regardless of what species they are pursuing. From a padded suspension system to two zippered security pockets, this vest offers many high-end features. Plus, movable hip pockets give hunters the ability to place their shells and accessories wherever is handiest for them.

At the upper end of upland vest options, the Filson Upland Guide



PROIS PRADLANN VEST

Strap Vest offers a ton of features that make it worth the expenditure. This vest features a wide, padded waist belt to keep the weight off your hips and on your shoulders. It also has a number of handy pockets for



FILSON UPLAND GUIDE STRAP VEST

your gear and gadgets, as well as a structured, easy-to-load game bag.

For the growing number of women upland hunters, Prois offers its Pradlann Vest. Made specifically for the female form, it will fit great while also



ORVIS PRO LT VEST

providing all-day comfort in the field. Plus, an expandable game bag with lower side panels allows you to load birds without being a contortionist or needing a friend to assist. **HR**

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HUNTING RETAILER

GEAR ROUNDUP

BIG-GAME AMMUNITION

Load your store shelves with ammo that packs a punch for a wide variety of big-game hunting pursuits.

BY GORDY KRAHN

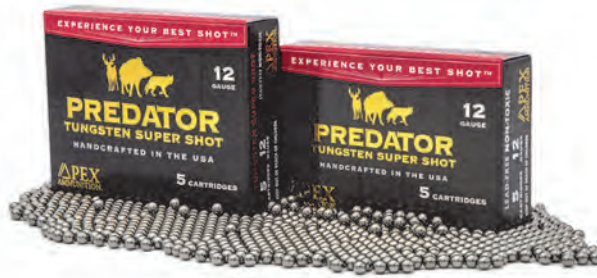
With post-pandemic ammunition finally finding its way to store shelves and retailer websites, big-game hunters are in a feeding frenzy as summer tune-up sessions and long-awaited big-game adventures loom on the horizon. But only when your customers stuff their hunting rifles full of the best premium ammunition they can get their hands on will they reap the full benefits of the accuracy and terminal performance that will produce the positive results they're looking for — a trophy on the wall and a freezer full of fresh protein. Modern big-game hunters are specialists, in that they have a wide variety of preferences when it comes to the types of guns they shoot and the bullets they feed them. Be assured that the ammo-buying season is upon us, and it behooves you to take advantage by stocking a wide variety to fit the wants and needs of your customers — taking advantage of the current uptick in ammunition production and availability. Here is a down-and-dirty dozen to get you started.





406 AMMUNITION .300 WIN. MAG.

406 Ammunition's .300 Win. Mag. 200-grain premium Nosler AccuBond (\$74/box of 20) is the premier big-game cartridge for hunters looking for custom-loaded precision – designed, tested and perfected in the mountains of Montana for anyone who is gearing up for their next big-game adventure. Leaving the barrel at 2,949 fps and sporting a sleek .588 BC, it provides the combination of great long-range accuracy with deep penetration and high weight retention for devastating terminal performance. With 406 Ammunition's .300 Win. Mag., hunters can confidently take the shot on their next hunt knowing their ammunition is more than up to the challenge. www.406ammo.com



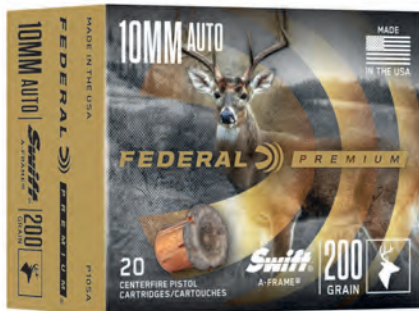
APEX PREDATOR/DEER TSS

Shotshells for big game and predators traditionally meant massive lead pellets and a low pattern count, which unfortunately delivered limited performance. Not anymore. Suitable for anchoring whitetail deer, wild hogs and all sorts of predators, Predator/Deer TSS shotgun ammunition from Apex (\$42.99-\$64.99/box of five) turns any shotgun into a big-game/predator hunting machine. Apex's TSS loads – available in Nos. 4, 2 and BB shot sizes in 20- and 12-gauge 2¼-, 3- and 3½-inch loads – capitalize on superior density to deliver extended range and penetration while maximizing pattern retention. www.apexmunition.com



ARMSCOR .308 WIN. 165-GRAIN ACCUBOND

With a muzzle velocity of 2,500 fps, Armscor's 165-grain .308 Win. AccuBond offering (\$36.29/box of 20) is a great choice for a wide variety of big-game hunting applications. Through an exclusive bonding process that eliminates voids in the bullet core, AccuBond couples Nosler's proven copper-alloy jacket with its special lead-alloy core. The result is a bullet that flies true, penetrates deep and retains its weight, without causing extensive barrel fouling. Its unique white polymer tip resists deformation and initiates expansion on impact. Nosler's Solid Base at the rear of the bullet acts as a platform for large-diameter mushrooms. Armscor offers a wide selection of competitively priced ammunition and components for shooters who demand precise and dependable performance. www.armscor.com



FEDERAL SWIFT A-FRAME 10MM AUTO

Handgun hunters leave nothing to chance when it comes to bullet choice for big-game hunting. And that's why Federal Premium's Swift A-Frame 10mm Auto ammunition (\$63.99/box of 20) is a great option. It leverages the A-Frame bullet's unique makeup for lethal performance – its bonded front half expanding consistently across a broad velocity range, while the back half remains intact for deep penetration. A nickel-plated case prevents corrosion and promotes smooth extraction, and a specially formulated propellant and unique high-performance Federal primer ensure consistent ignition. www.federalpremium.com



FORT SCOTT MUNITIONS .223 REM. TUI

Fort Scott Munitions .223 Rem. TUI ammo (\$26.67/box of 20) features a solid copper match-grade bullet engineered to tumble upon impact to provide devastating terminal performance. It is precision machined and loaded with the utmost care within tight tolerances for dependable accuracy. This gives the user the advantage of being able to hunt bigger game than is typical with the .223-caliber cartridge. Upon entry into soft tissue, the TUI projectile begins to tumble, causing a high degree of energy transfer and massive internal damage. And the solid copper projectile provides hunters the freedom to pursue wild game where lead ammo is prohibited. www.fortscottmunitions.com



GRIZZLY CARTRIDGE .300 WIN. MAG.

When it comes to magnum rifle cartridges, there aren't many that match the versatility of the .300 Win. Mag., and Grizzly Cartridge has three new loads for a wide variety of hunting situations. The Grizzly 180-grain Nosler AccuBond Spitzer (\$59.99/box of 20) leaves the barrel at 3,200 fps and is a great option for hunting elk, deer and other big-bodied game – its bonded-core, soft-point bullet retaining much of its weight on impact. Looking for a little more velocity? Grizzly's 165-grain and 150-grain offerings – 3,275 and 3,350 fps respectively – produce stellar long-range hunting performance. Each round is carefully loaded in the USA under the strictest guidelines. www.grizzlycartridge.com





HORNADY .30-06 SPRG. 180-GRAIN CX OUTFITTER

A good match for hunting the backcountry to the back forty, Hornady's .30-06 Sprg. 180-grain CX Outfitter ammunition (\$56.27/box of 20) features corrosion-resistant nickel-plated cases that are sealed watertight and topped with the accurate and rugged CX bullet, designed to perform under the toughest conditions. It generates a muzzle velocity of 2,600 fps and produces 2,702 foot-pounds of energy. The copper alloy eXpanding CX bullet provides uniform, controlled expansion, deep penetration and +95% weight retention. CX Outfitter ammunition is California-compatible and appropriate for other areas requiring nontraditional bullets.

www.hornady.com



HSM TROPHY GOLD

Matched with world-renowned Berger VLD (Very Low Drag) bullets that are extremely aerodynamic to shoot flat and buck wind well, Trophy Gold ammunition from HSM (MSRP varies by caliber) uses select powders to maintain maximum velocity across extended distances. VLD bullets penetrate 2 to 3 inches before expansion, which then causes it to fragment, resulting in massive wounds. Trophy Gold Rifle ammo is made with Winchester brass, match-grade primers and powders that aren't affected by temperature or altitude. The result is an amazing factory load that will rival even the best handloads. Trophy Gold is available in 35 calibers, ranging from 6mm BR all the way to .338 Norma.

www.hsmammunition.com



REMINGTON CORE-LOKT TIPPED

The "Deadliest Mushroom in the Woods" is now even deadlier with the introduction of Remington's new centerfire rifle big-game line of Core-Lokt Tipped ammunition, (\$44.99-\$65.99/box of 20) – offering the same proven on-game performance as the original Core-Lokt with improved long-range ballistics, in-flight accuracy and rapid expansion. Its proven Core-Lokt jacket is tuned for optimal performance on big game, achieving match-grade accuracy with its center of gravity adjusted rearward to maximize accuracy. Core-Lokt Tipped ammo also features factory-fresh Remington brass of the highest quality, a premier propellant blend specially chosen for optimal performance and a dependable Remington primer for fast and sure ignition.

www.remington.com



SELLIER & BELLOT EXERGY BLUE

Featuring a new generation of lead-free bullets, eXergy Blue big-game hunting ammunition from Sellier & Bellot (MSRP NA) employs a modern, highly efficient design incorporating a boattail base with a new, pointed tip for flat trajectory and maximum retained energy – enhancing expansion and terminal performance at all ranges – while its solid copper construction maximizes weight retention. The eXergy Blue is available in a wide variety of calibers, including the popular 165-grain .30-06 Springfield, which leaves the barrel at 2,785 fps and generates 2,842 foot-pounds of energy at the muzzle.

www.sellierbellot.us



SIERRA 6.5 CREEDMOOR GAMECHANGER

Sierra has expanded its popular GameChanger ammunition lineup with the addition of the 6.5 Creedmoor topped with its 140-grain Sierra GameChanger bullet (\$66.99/box of 20) – delivering top-shelf accuracy and bone-punching terminal performance, all packed in a precisely tuned cartridge. Sierra's GameChanger ammunition is the result of more than 70 years of designing world-class bullets. Each GameChanger round utilizes the new Gamechanger bullet design that incorporates features from other types of Sierra bullets, resulting in a unique and enhanced product. It features a synthetic tip to maximize ballistic coefficient and increased jacket wall thickness to ensure deep penetration. This gives users a true all-purpose bullet design for a wide application of hunting situations.

www.sierrabullets.com

WINCHESTER 6.8 WESTERN COPPER IMPACT

Winchester's all new Copper Impact line of ammunition – it's all-copper bullet formerly offered in the Deer Season XP series – is now available in 14 centerfire versions, including the formidable 162-grain Extreme Point Copper 6.8 Western chambering (MSRP NA). This large-impact-diameter boattail base bullet, topped with a red polymer tip, expands immediately upon contact to deliver massive knockdown power, designed for improved weight retention over jacketed lead-core bullets. The 6.8 Western version leaves the barrel at 2,875 fps, generating 2,973 foot-pounds of energy. Copper Impact is also available in 12- and 20-gauge sabot slugs.

www.winchester.com



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Sports South's goal is to have the right product in the right place at the right time. Through innovation and steady management, this fifth-generation family operation has earned a reputation as the most respected distributor in the firearms industry. Sports South works diligently and tirelessly to assure a consistent and timely flow of product to their dealers and ultimately the consumer.

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The Best Store Setups for Whitetail Hunters

Deer hunters are about to drop into buying mode if they haven't already. Are you prepared?

BY CAROLEE ANITA BOYLES

It's the dream of every deer hunter. A magnificent buck comes silently slipping in, hidden by the lingering morning mist — until he steps from behind a tree. At first, he's just a shape in the fog, but then the first daylight catches the points of his antlered crown. A deep breath, a steady aim and the hunter has the quarry.

The dream has remained the same as long as humans have been hunting. Over the past decade or so, however, hunters have changed. Gear has changed as well, from new calibers and high-tech riflescopes to new kinds of blinds and treestands.

Shifting Trends

Chance Clanahan is one of the managers at Paducah Shooters Supply in Paducah, Kentucky. He shared that his deer-hunting clientele has undergone some significant changes in the past few years.

"There are a lot more women involved in deer hunting now," he observed. "That's been the biggest change for us."

Whether or not the age range of hunters has changed is open to question.

"We talk about it all the time," Clanahan continued. "I think, overall, the average age has gone up. I think deer hunters tend to be older than they were before."

Paducah Shooters Supply merchandises whitetail mineral supplements, like Lucky Buck and Rack One Thrive Pellets, next to blinds, tree stand harnesses and other related accessories.

This change has resulted in alterations in the setups hunters are purchasing. However, Clanahan's not convinced there's any cause-and-effect ripple taking place — it's more a significant number of hunters have been influenced by what they see and read.

"It seems like everybody wants long-range rifles," he lends. "Hunters see people shooting deer on TV

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at 700, 800, 900 yards and they want to try it too.”

When hunters start looking for long-range rifles, Clanahan said, they look for a fast and flat-shooting caliber.

“The 6.5 Creedmoor leads the way,” he added. “Right behind it, we’re seeing the .300 Win. Mag. and the 7mm Rem. Mag.”

Of course, it takes good optics to complete a long-range setup — and this has changed from previous years as well.

“Hunters are putting more tactical, long-range scopes on a lot of guns,” Clanahan said. “But here’s where the difference in age comes in: Older guys who are coming in here buying new deer rifles look through one of those long-range scopes and hand it back. Every one of them says the same thing: ‘That’s too confusing.’ The younger guys want those advanced reticles.”

The finishing touch in putting together a good hunting rifle setup is the right ammunition. “The long-range group is buying Hornady,” Clanahan confirmed. “They’re buying a lot of the newer bullets such as the ELD-X.”

One other thing hunters want, Clanahan said, is shooting houses.

“The demand for them doubles every year,” he shared. “I used to order one truckload and it would get me through the year. But we brought two truckloads in spring last year; we sold them fast and started working on the second two truckloads. And I had another two truckloads ordered to arrive a few weeks later.”

Clanahan expects the trend toward more shooting houses to continue for the next few years. “I think you’re going to see it grow, and I think you’re going to see pop-up ground blinds continue to grow, too,” he predicts. “I also don’t see any end to the long-range trend.”

Another trend to watch, he said, is technical clothing.

“The days of guys going out in a pair of Carhartt coveralls are a thing of the past,” he said. “These people want waterproof and windproof. They want more technical fabric.”



Topography, Local Laws Impact Buying Trends

Bill Vanleave is a co-owner of Outdoor Country in Bishop, Texas. Like Clanahan, he’s also seeing a trend toward long-range in the riflescope combos deer hunters are setting up.

“Hunters used to buy .30-06, .243 and .270,” he recalled. “Now they’re going to 6.5 Creedmoor. Most of the guns are still bolt-action; they’re buying Weatherby and Ruger.”

Even hunters who aren’t buying new guns, though, are adding new optics to their deer hunting setups.

And of course, there’s camo. Tammy Johns, a sales associate at Outdoor Country, said the camo sold in south Texas isn’t the same camo sold throughout the rest of the country.

“Our customers buy GameGuard camo, which is a south Texas camo,” Johns noted. “It has cactus and mesquite on it. It’s specifically for this area. We also carry Brush

Country.”

In Michigan, different firearms are allowed in different management zones, which means a wide range of setups for deer hunting. At Jay’s Sporting Goods in Clare County, Gun Department Manager Jeania Canel said customers purchase a variety of guns.

“Overall, bolt-action rifles are our more popular rifles for deer hunting,” she said. “Ruger and Savage do well for us in the category.”

Recent changes in Michigan regulations have meant a change in what hunters purchase.

“What they’re going to buy depends on what zone they’re hunting in,” she said. “Since they opened the shotgun zone to be more geared to straight-wall cartridges, they don’t have to use shotguns anymore. There, you’re talking more single-shot rifles.”

The terrain of the area also affects what people purchase.

“If you’re talking about a farmer

who’s hunting open fields, he’s going to go for a bolt-action rifle to shoot at a greater distance,” Canel noted. “If someone is hunting on state land or is hunting on private land in a swamp or wooded area, they’re typically going to go with a lever-action. With a heavier bullet, it’ll be more stable if they’re shooting through brush.”

When it comes to caliber, according to Canel, the 6.5 Creedmoor is the caliber of choice for many hunters.

Winchester 350 Legend Ammo

A straight-wall cartridge offering little recoil, the Winchester .350 Legend cartridge has generated a considerable amount of attention from customers since its introduction in 2019. For whitetail hunters in straight-wall states, this round represents a capable option.

“The 6.5 Creedmoor is a huge seller for us right now,” she said.



“The .450 Bushmaster and the .350 Legend are the newest of the calibers, so people come in wanting those because they’ve read about them or heard about them.”

In optics, Canel said, a significant number of hunters are coming in and saying they want to take an animal at 600 yards. Other hunters still shoot more modest distances of a hundred yards or so.

“We have probably 30 different optics brands in our showcases,” Canel said. “What customers want depends heavily on what they’re going to do. In standard hunting scopes, Leupold is the leader. If you start talking long-range, you’re probably looking at Nightforce, Vortex or Trijicon — that’s where you’re getting into big bucks.”

Technology a Key Driver Behind Long-Range Pursuits

Anthony Puglia is the manager at Puglia’s Sporting Goods in Metairie, Louisiana. He said his whitetail deer customers are looking for rifle and scope combos that will allow them to shoot greater distances.

“More people are wanting ballistically faster rounds and a flatter shooting gun,” he said. “To complement that, they’re stepping up their ammo selection or getting custom ammo. They’re also stepping up their optics.”

In years past, Puglia recalled, he mostly sold Z-Plex reticles with standard crosshairs.

“Now, most of our customers are wanting a ballistic reticle,” he shared. “They want something they can use to shoot 500 to 800 yards.”

Puglia said he thinks the technology of today’s optics is part of what’s driving the trend to long-range hunting.

“Years ago, a deer hunter was happy to shoot 200 yards, even though the gun might have been able to shoot farther,” he said. “Since guns, ammo, scopes and rangefinders will all help share the capability of shooting that far, I think hunters are more confident of their ability. Hunters are more confident now with the tools available.”

Like other dealers feature here, Puglia is also seeing a strong market for the 6.5 Creedmoor.

He predicts the next big trend impacting deer hunting rifles will be new finish options for barrels and stocks. Cerakote has emerged as a popular barrel finish option — especially for hunters operating in harsh conditions.

“I think it has been our number-one caliber the past couple of years,” he said. “We’re also selling a lot of 26 Nosler. Probably our top

three sellers are Christensen Arms, Browning Hell’s Canyon rifles and Bergara rifles.”

Sitka clothing is a hot seller for Puglia’s shop. “Sitka has really taken off for us,” he said. “It holds the biggest part of our clothing pie, even though we carry other manufacturers such as Browning and Beretta. Sitka has kind of revolutionized the clothing industries because of its features and advantages. They make everything from head to toe, and it’s flawless. They listen to



feedback and make changes when changes need to be made.”

Puglia shared his customers like Sitka so much they come back for more garments, even though it’s one of the highest-priced clothing lines in the store.

“They come in and buy a pair of pants and a jacket, and they love it so much they come back and buy the vest or the liners,” Puglia added. “Then they come back and buy the gloves. Once they have the whole setup for duck hunting, then they come back and get it for deer hunting.”

Although he doesn’t sell a lot of ground blinds, Puglia said, the brand he sells the most of is Primos.

“There’s the SurroundView 360-degree Primos ground blind you’re able to see through the fabric,” he said. “You don’t have to look through a window or an opening. But if you’re standing on the outside, you can’t see anybody on the inside.” His bestselling ladder tree-stand is Millennium, both one-man and two-man stands.

While they aren’t part of a deer hunter’s basic “kit,” deer feeders are a hot item in Louisiana.

“We sell a lot of Moultrie feeders,” Puglia confirmed. “Not gravity feeders, but motorized tripod feeders.” The big thing he’s seeing customers buy in game cameras, Puglia said, is cell phone-operated cameras made by Covert.

The next big trend, Puglia predicts, is going to be rifles that are cosmetically different.

“Customers are asking for them,” he said. “Instead of just a standard blued or stainless barrel, some of our customers are wanting something that’s Cerakoted, in multiple colors. So, take one model and put it in the Cerakote bronze finish, and make one in grey Cerakote. So, you have different colored barrels and then put them in different colored stocks. Instead of a black synthetic stock, put them in a wood stock or a laminate stock. Use something to complement the color of the barrel. A lot of people like the carbon look, so maybe a grey carbon fiber stock.”



**A Move Toward ...
Electric Bicycles?**

Ronnie Groom owns C&G Sporting Goods in Panama City, Florida. Groom has seen some big changes in how hunters go after deer.

“Hunters are more conservative now,” he said. “They’re shooting older bucks and letting younger ones walk. There’s also a lot more leasing going on now. Sometimes it’s hard to find a public place to hunt, so leases have become more and more popular.”

In the past, you couldn’t find a gun and scope setup for under \$400. “Now, with companies such as Savage making lower-end guns that are still good quality, it’s opening up the field to sell more guns because people can afford them more,” Groom said. “We’re selling more guns because of this.”

Groom also is seeing the big trend to the 6.5 Creedmoor. “It’s our biggest-selling caliber,” he says. “It’s a



fine caliber, with less recoil. Some people buy an expensive, high-end gun, and some buy a lower-end gun, but they’re buying that caliber. We sell a lot of Brownings and Thompson/Centers.”

Popup blinds also are part of the

north Florida deer hunter’s setup.

“It’s especially true where I am,” Groom said. “After Hurricane Michael, there weren’t a lot of trees left around here. But even before that, popup blinds were really popular. We sell more Ameristep than any of

the others.” His customers also buy a lot of game feeders and cameras.

Groom has an inspired idea for hunters who must walk a long way to their treestand. “Electric bicycles,” he declared, “are really great. They’re really catching on. Right now, I have to park a quarter- to a half-mile from my treestand. I can get on my bicycle and ride quietly right up to the base of the tree, then get off and climb it. You can use the battery, pedal, or a combination of the two. It saves me a lot of walking and makes no noise.”

One thing that’s becoming clear: as technology continues to enhance firearms, optics, ammunition, clothing, blinds and more, deer hunters will continue to have more options than ever before. Your store’s ability to carry the right mix of products, sprinkled with a heavy dose of friendly know-how, will ensure hunters keep coming back to you for all seasons. **HR**

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BY GORDY KRAHN

HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS



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Part of Remington's 2022 new shotshell lineup and available in 12-gauge, 20-gauge and .410-bore, Premier TSS Turkey loads are the company's deadliest gobbler getter. Tungsten Super Shot density makes smaller shot sizes viable and increases pellet counts when compared to lead pellets of comparable weight. In fact, the 18g/cc TSS blend is 22 percent denser than standard tungsten and over 55 percent denser than lead. This means smaller shot sizes can be used for increased pellet counts and denser patterns while generating the energy and velocity of larger lead shot – delivering increased range and more smackdown power. Its exclusive new Remington R top-wad ensures consistent patterns, and carefully selected propellants and primers produce optimal velocity. MSRP: \$45.99-\$68.99/Box of five www.remington.com

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Antler King's Trophy Clover Mix boasts the highest protein, tonnage-producing perennial mix on the market for reliable deer and turkey food plots that last up to six years. Treated with Ultra Coat Orange for higher germination rates and increased forage yield, Trophy Clover Mix can grow 2 to 3 feet tall with up to 10 tons of 30 percent protein forage per acre to grow trophy bucks. Four clover varieties, chicory and rapeseed provide a hardy food source that's nutritious, palatable and digestible through spring, summer and fall. Trophy Clover Mix can be planted in the spring or fall. It's available in 3.5-, 24- and 40-pound bags. MSRP: \$34.99-\$299.99 www.antlerking.com



NOMAD HAILSTORM NXT JACKET AND PANTS

The Hailstorm NXT jacket from Nomad features a quiet and stretchable 2.5-layer shell rated 35k waterproof and 15k breathable. It repels water while allowing for heat and condensation to escape and provides plenty of room for gear in the zippered chest pockets, while the deep, zippered pockets keep hands dry and warm. In warm conditions, zippered armpits help hunters stay cooler by letting body heat dissipate. The jacket also sports an adjustable hood and hem for a perfect fit. The Hailstorm NXT pants utilize the same waterproof and windproof protection from waist to ankles. Zippered leg openings allow for easy dressing or removal over pants and boots, and ample zippered and cargo pockets provide room for essential gear. MSRP: \$170/Each (3XL + \$10) www.nomadoutdoor.com

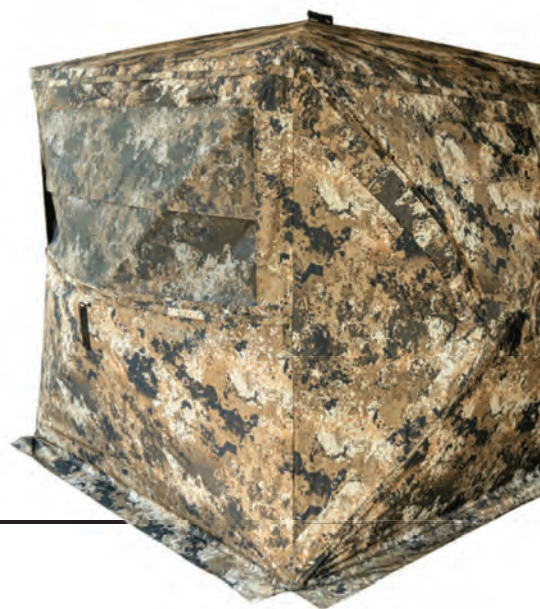


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ATN X-Sound hearing protection provides 22+ dB noise reduction while delivering natural sound with omnidirectional microphones. The sound-activated compression circuit has a reaction time of .02 seconds, and by using a smartphone or other Bluetooth-compatible device, users can connect their ATN X-Sound earmuffs to music, podcasts and phone calls. The low-power earmuffs are ergonomically designed with low-profile ear cups that allow for full clearance of a rifle or shotgun stock without having to adjust the earmuffs or the gun. An audio input jack and two high-gain omnidirectional microphones are built in, and a compact folding design makes storage easy. The comfortable headband is on a durable metal frame that keeps the earmuffs from slipping. MSRP: \$119 www.atncorp.com

BUCK BOURBON RACK HOUSE 300+ BLIND

Buck Bourbon's Rack House 300+ hunting blind features One Way Mesh on three of its four sides and one mini rear door window for maximum visibility, and an integrated black out curtain system conceals movement even during the brightest days. The Rack House 300+ is constructed of tough 300 denier polyester blended fabric that features a brush-in attachment system, and its saloon-style spring-back door provides silent access. The blind is a tall 67 inches, and the footprint is 66 inches square. Inside, there are two accessory pockets, and all Rack House hunting blinds are patterned in Veil Wideland camo. The package includes the blind, a backpack carrying case, four guy lines and 12 stakes. MSRP: \$189.99 www.buckbourbon.com





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Cobra Archery has introduced its first hinge release in the company's 48-year history. The Professional three-finger style release is made from 100 percent stainless steel that gives the desired weight and durability target archers and bowhunters demand. Its roller sear has an extra-wide roller to disperse hook pressure and to produce an effortless rotation for an incredibly smooth shot. The Professional's grip is an identical match to the Harvester thumb release. It has a unique fully adjustable hot/cold setting, and the release features a spring-loaded hook and head that allow the shooter to address the D-loop in any position, keeping the release firmly in place and always ready.

MSRP: \$184.99 www.cobraarchery.com



AIRFORCE AIRGUNS CF SERIES TEXAN AIR RIFLE

Airforce Airguns single-shot CF Series Texan rifles feature a carbon-fiber air tank that allows shooters to fill their rifles to 250 Bar (3,625 psi) and harness the ultimate in big-bore airgun power – an increase from 700 foot-pounds of muzzle energy in .510-caliber to over 800 foot-pounds. Texan CF Series rifles are available in two calibers, .457 and .510, in standard Texan, Texan LSS, Texan SS and Texan Carbine configurations. Every Texan rifle is made in the company's Fort Worth, Texas-based factory – its match-grade barrels sourced from Lothar Walther in Germany. With a reputation for flexibility and legendary accuracy, AirForce Airguns offers a solution for just about any airgun shooting and hunting situation. MSRP: Price varies by model.

www.airforceairguns.com



BONE-DRI BIG SHUUG SHOTGUN SLEEVE

The Big Shuug Shotgun Sleeve from Bone-Dri is engineered with advanced materials to wick away moisture – protecting shotguns from rust after they've been exposed to moisture. Humidity and moisture can affect the performance of any shotgun by causing rust and making it difficult to clean it. Unlike other shotgun cases or sleeves, Bone-Dri cases are engineered with Absorbites technology, which automatically draws moisture from the shotgun and can be used an unlimited number of times – simply recharge the material after use by placing the Big Shuug in the sun or drying it with a hairdryer on low heat. The Big Shuug is constructed from heavy-duty industrial strength 800D PVC nylon and accommodates shotguns up to 60 inches in length. MSRP: \$99.99 www.bone-dri.com



TRUE KNIVES FIXED BLADE KNIFE

From pommel to point, the Fixed Blade tactical-style knife from True Knives is a do-it-all tool that's ideal for hunting duties, campsite chores or everyday carry. Its 4-inch drop-point full-tang blade is made from 8Cr13MoV stainless steel with a robust black oxide finish providing corrosion resistance, low-light reflection and sharp edge retention. The entire easy-to-grip handle is made of TPR with an integrated glass breaker pommel. Weighing 9.6 ounces, this knife is lightweight and easy to carry in its included molded sheath as either a scout carry, MOLLE or drop configuration. The knife's .125-inch-thick spine provides robust and durable construction for heavy use while retaining a stainless edge for fine tasks. MSRP: \$44.99 www.true.acgbrands.com



DOINKER CARBON FIELD STABILIZERS

Doinker's new Carbon Field bow stabilizers combine an extremely strong carbon body with a modular EXO Doinker for maximum stability and tune configuration for demanding bowhunters. They have been developed with a new smaller-diameter (.475-inch) carbon body, stronger and stiffer than ever, and work flawlessly with the company's newly designed EXO Doinker. And because of the smaller-diameter body, Carbon Field stabilizers are less affected by wind, a huge advantage for Western bowhunters. They are available in 12-, 10- and 8-inch lengths and weigh 10.9, 10.4 and 10 ounces respectively. An adequate number of weights are included, but additional weights can be purchased separately. All Doinker stabilizers and accessories are proudly made in the USA. MSRP: \$139.99 www.doinker.com

EASTON SUPERDRIVE MICRO-DIAMETER ARROW

Easton Archery's new SuperDrive Micro arrow is the latest addition to the SuperDrive family of all-carbon high-performance arrows – purpose built for outdoor competition in target and 3D shooting. With a wind-cheating 4mm diameter, the SuperDrive Micro is engineered to provide the lightest grains-per-inch, giving archers a high-speed arrow built to raise scores and find the center

of target farther downrange. This makes an effective shaft platform for unknown distance 3D shooting, but it also produces higher scores in windy conditions on the target field. The SuperDrive Micro is available in 11 spines from 325 to 950 and features an extremely tight $\pm .002$ -inch straightness spec. It is available with a full line of Easton 4mm glue-in target points, pin inserts, pin nocks and direct-fit nocks. www.eastonarchery.com



Getting Engaged

The difference between you and a big-box retailer is something you can offer that they can't: real customer engagement.

BY BOB ROBB

Getting engaged is one of the most important and defining moments of anyone's life. And while I could be talking about matrimony, here I'm talking about getting engaged to customers — both existing customers, and others you'd like to become customers. For life.

I've spent most of my professional career with something of a split personality — as an editor/writer/editorial planner, and, for decades, as an industry consultant to several major companies in the hunting business, where I helped them and their manufacturing partners develop and design new products, as well as market them at retail. And my wife owned a small retail sporting goods shop she began from scratch for more than a decade, where, like many of you, she had to stay nimble to attract and keep (for life) customers who chose to do business with her rather than the competition, which included local big-box retailers. So, I've spent a lot of time in retail shops of all sizes, both as a customer and as a businessman, watching and listening to shop owners as they engage with the buying public.

In the modern, pre-pandemic world, where the masses learned that buying stuff online is easy and convenient, why would they change those habits and walk into a brick-and-mortar shop instead? The answer is simple: They believe they can get the kind of information and service from you they cannot get from an impersonal website.

Today, mega-online sellers often base decisions on nothing more than metric-driven, mass-mail-type engagement driven by the Strong Law of Large Numbers and mysterious algorithms established by geeks who probably know little to nothing about the "target audience" above

past buying habits and demographic statistics. And that works for faceless, price and/or convenience-driven behemoths like Amazon.

But the Amazons and Facebooks of the world can't tune a customer's bow or match it with the proper arrow shaft, mount a riflescope properly, teach a gun safety or hunter education course, assist with hunt planning, or pair store inventory with a customer's personal likes and dislikes to help them achieve the ultimate in satisfaction and success. They think of customers as numbers, not as friends. And people want to do business with their friends, people they trust to do right by them. This has never been truer than today, as we come out of the hell of two-year pandemic lockdowns, ridiculous mask mandates and other restrictions on our freedoms that have, in no small measure, accelerated the impersonality of society.

These impersonal behemoths will endure simply because they offer products cheaper than small retailers can. But here's the thing. They market solely on size, with advertising campaigns and marketing programs designed to reach tens of millions of people at a time. Their hope is that, out of those many millions, a few will buy something. Smart marketing campaigns, however, make the company — big or small, including you — seem personable, relatable and likable. At the same time, small business owners must emphasize the fact

that they are more than capable and nimble enough to meet an individual customer's needs quickly and efficiently. And do it with a smile.

One thing I've learned over seven decades on earth is that, as John Lydgate (1370 – 1450), a monk and poet, famously once said, "You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time." As a niche small business owner, you really should not care about trying to please the masses all the time. You want, and need, to please that small group of people that are existing customers — but also others that can be converted into customers for life.

Why is this important? For one thing, you cannot ever take quality existing customers for granted. They're the bedrock of your business. Did you know that, according to *invespcro.com*, it costs five times as much to attract a new customer as it does to keep an existing one? And that the probability of selling to an existing customer is 60 to 70 percent, while the probability of selling to a new customer is 5 to 20 percent?

And as the old advertising saying goes, really effective marketing doesn't just sell the sizzle of the steak — it has other diners telling you how good their steaks were. Existing customers singing your praises to those seeking your products and services is the very best advertising of all.

Here's a personal example. I recently obtained a Trijicon SRO optic to put on top of my Kimber Custom Compact .45 ACP. To do so required obtaining a plate to replace the existing rear sight, then mounting the optic and sighting the gun in. I know a small gun seller specializing in estate sales where I live, so I called him, and he referred me to a very small gunsmith in my area with whom he has had many good experiences. I met the man, saw his shop, liked what he had to say, and gave him my business. He did an excellent job and charged me a fair price. Now I know where I can go with any and all gunsmithing needs — and have become a customer for life who will tell my friends.

The pandemic taught me many things, but two stand out, as they relate to getting engaged. One is that people want to belong to successful, like-minded groups. Engaging those customers, both new and old, showing them you understand and empathize with where they're coming from and what they need, will draw them into the all-important inner circle of your business. The second is that once they're inside, showing them they are appreciated and valued will keep them coming back. Because while belonging to the group is important, feeling valued is crucial.

How do you get engaged with customers? Drop me a note at editor@grandviewoutdoors.com. I'd love to hear from you. **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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THE RIDGELINE FFT IS OUR QUINTESSENTIAL HUNTING RIFLE

Utilizing the latest in carbon fiber manufacturing, the Ridgeline FFT is up to a full pound lighter while introducing additional features such as an FFT carbon fiber floor plate and bolt knob. The new side-baffle brake and stylish paint scheme distinguish the new model even further, all while retaining the Christensen Arms Sub-MOA Guarantee.

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