

HUNTING

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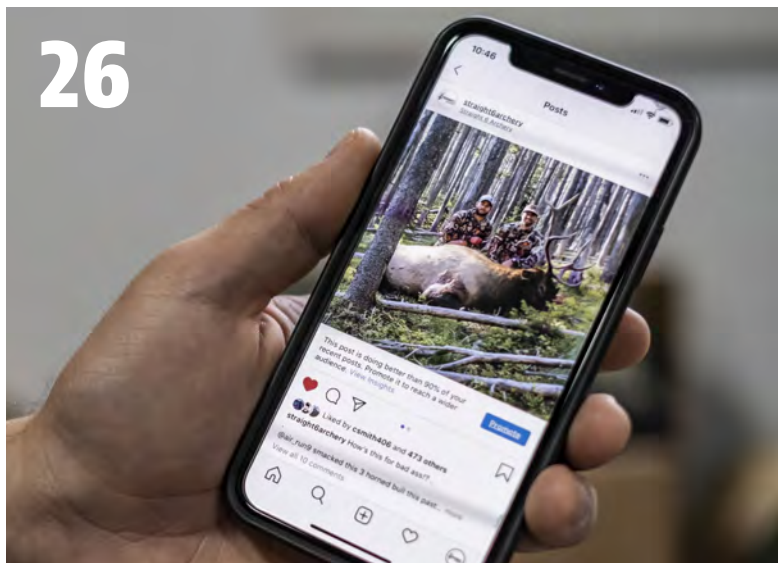




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EXPEDITION

The Taurus Expedition

The Taurus Expedition stands as a testament to Taurus USA's commitment to crafting exceptional firearms tailored specifically for hunters and outdoor enthusiasts. As the debut bolt action rifle from Taurus, the Expedition embodies a blend of innovative design, precision engineering, and rugged durability, making it an ideal companion for your most demanding adventures in the wilderness.

At the heart of the Expedition lies a Remington 700-style action, renowned for its reliability and performance. This solid foundation sets the stage for exceptional accuracy, with the rifle frequently achieving sub-MOA (Minute of Angle) accuracy thanks to its hammer-forged barrel. Whether you're targeting distant game or honing your marksmanship skills, the Expedition's consistent and reliable accuracy ensures confidence with every shot.

One of the standout features of the Expedition is its user-friendly design, exemplified by its compatibility with commonly available AICS (Accuracy International Chassis System) pattern magazines. This compatibility not only enhances convenience but also allows for seamless integration with a variety of accessories and customization options, empowering hunters to tailor their rifle to their unique preferences and hunting styles.

The thoughtful design considerations extend to the stock of the Expedition, which features a scalloped cut designed to ensure a perfect fit in gun saddles, enhancing stability and comfort during extended hunts. Additionally, hunters can take advantage of the MLOK attachment point on the bottom of the stock and the integrated Spartan Precision attachment point, offering versatility for mounting accessories such as bipods, slings, or other essential gear.

Whether you're embarking on a challenging backcountry hunt or pursuing elusive game in diverse environments, the Taurus Expedition is purpose-built to handle it all. With its exceptional accuracy, user-friendly features, and rugged construction, the Expedition stands ready to be your trusted companion on your next hunting expedition, ensuring precision, reliability, and performance when it matters most.



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National Survey Sheds New Light on Outdoor Participation

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has followed trends in the outdoors since 1955 by conducting the National Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation Survey about every 5 years. Public conservation and wildlife agencies across the U.S. — including the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) — and commercial enterprises rely on the survey to reveal peaks and valleys in the numbers of hunters, anglers and others who participate in outdoor-related endeavors.

According to the latest survey, about 15% of Americans 16 and older fished an average of 20 days during 2022. Of those, 67% were male, 75% were white and 36% were in the 25-44 age group.

“The average expenditure per angler in 2022 was about \$2,500,” said Jessica Feltz, an AGFC conservation social scientist. “This could have been trip

expenditures, equipment, license fees or other expenses.” Feltz pointed out that among ethnic groups, Asian-Americans had the highest rate of fishing participation at 20%.

About 5.5% of Americans hunted in 2022, and 80% of those pursued big game such as elk, deer, bear or wild turkey. They averaged 12 days hunting big game and eight days chasing migratory birds, and spent an average of \$857 on hunting-related costs. Seventy-seven percent of hunters were male, and 35% were 55 or older.

Sport-shooting statistics were included in the survey for the first time, revealing that 47 million Americans participated in target shooting in 2021. Nineteen million people participated in target archery and 48 million took part in motorized pleasure boating (not fishing).

Mystery Ranch Sold to Yeti

Yeti has agreed to acquire well-known backpack company Mystery Ranch; terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Founded in 2006, the original Yeti cooler was said to be born out of frustration and passion. Yeti has since grown into a brand of pre-

mium outdoor gear designed for the outside enthusiast. Like Yeti, Mystery Ranch says its products have been built with durability and performance in mind for more than 20 years, whether for use on the fire line, backcountry hikes, whitetail woods or in your everyday activities.

“Yeti’s passion for innovation and the outdoors aligns closely with our founding vision,” said Dana Gleason, co-founder of Mystery Ranch. “Renée Sippel-Baker, my co-founder, and I know they are a perfect partner to build upon our long history of making the best

load-bearing equipment in the world for the most extreme users as well as the everyday mission.”

The Mystery Ranch team will continue to operate out of Bozeman, Montana, and will work with Yeti to integrate teams and functions.

Scent Thief Names New VP of Sales and Marketing

Scent control technology company Scent Thief recently announced the appointment of David Langston as vice president of sales and marketing. With over two decades of experience in the outdoor industry, Langston brings a wealth of expertise to elevate Scent Thief’s strategic growth and market presence.

Langston’s career includes establishing and nurturing well-known brands such as Muzzy Broadheads, Hunter Safety System, Can Cooker, and Wac’ Em Broadheads. His leadership role in the Independent Retail Initiative for Realtree further solidifies his reputation as a seasoned professional in the field.

“I have been blessed so much more than I deserve in this great industry

and, most importantly, learned the value of relationships and how to be successful: surround yourself with success,” said Langston. “As an avid hunter, I have never seen results in stopping an animal from smelling you like Scent Thief does. I became one of the many radical fans a few years back as I saw mature animals come closer than in all my years of hunting. When Scent Thief is used correctly, animals will not smell you. Guaranteed!”

The inventor, Russel Epperson, and the Carpenter family, dedicated hunters and proud owners of Scent Thief, express their excitement about Langston joining the team. Together, they are committed to furthering the success of this innovative brand in the hunting world.

Bowtech Celebrates 25 Years

Celebrating “25 Years of Technology That Matters,” Bowtech is proudly commemorating a quarter-century of innovation and excellence in the archery world. Since its inception in 1999, the brand has not only grown into a globally recognized leader in archery and bowhunting, but has also become

synonymous with groundbreaking technology in the industry.

Over these 25 years, Bowtech’s approach has been to develop tangible, impactful solutions — technology that significantly enhances the user experience rather than mere bells and whistles. This philosophy has been instrumental in the

development of innovations such as DeadLock, TimeLock, and Center-Mass technologies.

“As we celebrate 25 years, we’re immensely grateful for the unwavering support from our customers, partners, and the archery/bowhunting communities,” said Todd Snader, brand manager at Pure Ar-

chery Group. “This anniversary isn’t just a celebration of our past, but a commitment to our future — a future where we continue to celebrate the moments that matter. Bowtech is here to honor our customer’s experience and be a part of their story. What draws our community is what drives us.”



SDS Imports Hires Christopher DiCenso as CEO

SDS Imports is pleased to announce that the company has hired Christopher DiCenso as the company's CEO.

Chris brings over 30 years of experience to SDS, and most recently was a managing partner at Growth Strategy Partners, where he specialized in helping mostly firearm and related companies accelerate their revenue, profit and organizational growth. Chris has been the president of Camfour, started his career as a manufacturing engineer at Sturm Ruger, and competes regularly in IDPA, USPSA and 3-Gun matches.

"I met SDS Imports when I was the president of Camfour and was impressed with the company's product offering, but more importantly their longer term view on customer relationships," Chris said. "SDS has a very strong foundation, and I look forward to working with the owners and team."

SDS Imports has five firearm brands under its umbrella: Tisas USA, Tokarev USA, MAC, Inglis, and Spandau Arms.

Fulcrum Biometrics Announces its NFA/FFL LiveScan Express Bundle for Fingerprint Submission

Fulcrum Biometrics, a Fujitsu Company, proudly introduces the new FFL Express LiveScan bundle for easy use of NFA transactions and FFL dealers.

"Fulcrum Biometrics is dedicated to ensuring that NFA transactions are conducted in the most efficient and beneficial way possible for all parties involved, including the dealer, purchaser, and the ATF. By providing an affordable and user-friendly system, we aim to enhance the FFL's ability to conduct legally compliant and fast transactions, and to support the firearms and shooting sports industry," said Anthony Gonzales, Growth Executive at Fulcrum Biometrics. "Having grown up in the gun business, from working at a local gun store to being employed by a major manufacturer, and being an avid shooter, I am thrilled to make this contribution to the industry."

The FFL Express Bundle is currently being used by an increasing

number of FFL dealers all over the country. According to testimonials, the system is very quick and easy to operate, with many users reporting that they were up and running in no time after purchasing it. Additionally, ATF returns are said to be processed as quickly as within four days.

Create and send digital fingerprints for ATF Form 4 and ATF Form 1 electronically (EFT file) with Fulcrum Biometrics' FbF FFL LiveScan Express, built by the company that created the fingerprinting capability in Silencer Shop's kiosks.

To learn more about the FFL LiveScan Express Bundle and the complete product lineup from Fulcrum Biometrics, please visit fulcrumbiometrics.com. Fulcrum Biometrics is also seeking distributor agreements with built-in incentives for distributors. For all inquiries contact Anthony Gonzales; Anthony.g@fulcrumbiometrics.com. HR



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Use Positive Management Strategies to Make Your Employees Feel Valued

Making employees feel they matter is critical to retention, engagement and good health.

BY KEN WYSOCKY

Do your employees feel like they matter? In other words, do they feel valued by and connected to their managers and coworkers, and do they also feel like they advance the well-being of colleagues?

It's a tough question to answer, for sure. But the odds are that many employees feel insignificant at work, which creates a variety of problems, including high turnover, burnout, isolation and disengagement, says Gordon Flett, Ph.D., a professor in the psychology department at York University in Toronto.

"Generally speaking, there's a widespread mattering problem in the workplace," says Flett, who has studied the issue for years and is the author of *The Psychology of Mattering: Understanding the Human Need to Be Significant*. "It's an issue that has flown under the radar of industrial psychology. But it's an important issue because studies consistently show that feelings of not mattering are predictive of a host of issues related to self-esteem and a sense of belonging."

Organizations should be concerned about employees mattering because unhappiness and dissatisfaction in the workplace translates into



employee turnover or, at the very least, so-called "quiet quitting" and diminished productivity, Flett says.

"There also are direct links to mental and physical health issues," he adds. "So there's a cost to an organization from a human resources perspective. We know from past research that if someone feels like they don't matter, they're more prone to stress, burnout and absenteeism."

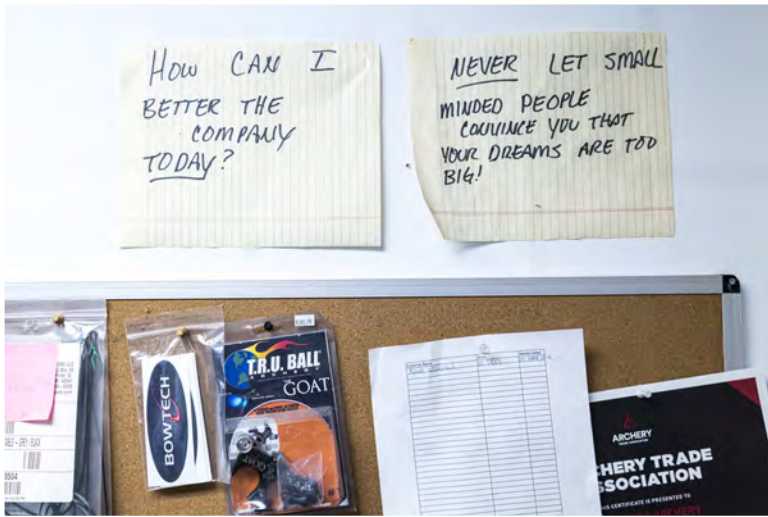
MORE NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Furthermore, dissatisfied employees also are likely to express their discontent to colleagues, which creates an ever-burgeoning negative climate. Moreover, what Flett calls "anti-mattering" is a strong predictor of anxiety, depression and substance abuse.

In addition, it can cause employees to disruptively act out to gain the

↑ Employees need to feel like they matter and that they're listened to. Not sure if your employees are happy? Ask them!





attention they feel they don't receive. In some cases, employees who feel like they've been unfairly isolated and marginalized might even engage in organizational sabotage, he says.

On the flip side, employees who feel like they do matter are better at withstanding things such as workplace stressors, loneliness and adversity. "It's a double-edged sword," Flett says. "Mattering is very protective when you feel it and very destructive when you don't. A strong element of mattering is hope — a positive outlook about what employees can do and how things will turn out. Hopefulness is very critical."

GOOD MANAGERS ARE KEY

Managers often contribute to anti-mattering by purposely or inadvertently favoring certain employees. "Employees are acutely aware when someone dominates the attention of someone in a leadership position," Flett says.

Furthermore, some managers mistakenly believe in motivating employees by ignoring them or being critical. "But they don't understand how easily employees can take minor negative feedback or even neutral feedback and infer that they're not important," Flett says.

In fact, one study showed that it



can take seven positive exchanges to make up for one negative interaction, he notes.

Given all this, is it possible that employees nowadays are just overly sensitive and need to toughen up? While Flett says he understands how some managers might feel that way, it's generally not a constructive attitude. "Some employees are capable of handling criticism and others fold up at the first sign of trouble and withdraw into themselves," he says. "Some need criticism and some need a pat on the back. But to me, toughening up is finding healthier ways to make people more resilient and adaptable. The key is having criticism come from someone who

employees believe has their best interests at heart. If they have a good relationship with their managers and know their managers believe in them, they'll respond better — not internalize comments and automatically feel they're inadequate and incompetent."

MAKING IT HAPPEN

So what can managers do to make

employers determine if they're meeting important mattering benchmarks, such as whether employees feel their work contributes to their company's success, whether they receive public praise for their efforts, whether the quality of their work positively impacts their organization and so forth.

"They key is to make such surveys anonymous or employees might not tell the truth," Flett says.

ASK CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Furthermore, managers should make a point to take their direct reports aside and ask them if they feel they matter at work and why they do or don't feel that way.

"You need to really listen so people feel they're truly being seen and heard," he says. "This could open up valuable conversations."

Managers also can strive to allow employees to provide input into decisions, which enhances their feeling of mattering; find opportunities to tell employees they matter; explain the big-picture impact of their work; and allow them to mentor other employees.

"Knowing they're influencing the next generation of workers can have an incredible impact," Flett says.

Going even deeper, though, managers need to show personal interest in employees that transcends talking just about work-related issues.

"It's not always easy and it takes time," he says. "And the interest has to be genuine and authentic. But whatever resources you commit will pay off in terms of better engagement and productivity, as well as limiting the related costs of mental and physical health issues. The bottom line is people will feel better about themselves and subsequently will make a difference in the lives of other people. Everyone wants to know they're making a positive difference." **HR**



New Lever Actions for 2024

Lever-action rifles are hotter than ever. And we're not just saying that with no facts and figures to back up the assertion.



BY MARK CHESNUT

At the end of 2023, sales of lever action rifles had jumped dramatically over the previous year, according to figures gleaned from the National Association of Sporting Goods Wholesalers' SCOPE Program, which targets such information. According to SCOPE, prices on lever guns were up nearly

12% over the past year, and dollar sales were up 57%.

In contrast, the same report showed bolt-action rifle sales up about 10%, but prices were down 1%. And for semi-auto rifles, sales were down 18%, with prices also down 18%.

The answer to "why the big jump

in lever-action sales" isn't clear. Perhaps it's because Western movies are making somewhat of a comeback. Or maybe it's due to some nostalgia, as a large number of gun buyers who grew up watching their favorite cowboys on television (me included) are entering their golden years.

Regardless of the cause, the im-

portant thing for retailers to know is that lever guns are hot, and likely to stay that way, at least for a while. Consequently, adding a new model or two to your inventory is likely a good strategy at this time.

That said, let's take a look at four new lever action rifles introduced at the recent SHOT Show in Las Vegas.





MARLIN 1894 CLASSIC

Many people — gun sellers and shooters alike — lamented the likely end of Marlin's historical lever actions when the company was purchased by Remington Outdoor Company back in 2007. And, indeed, things were looking fairly bleak until recently. Fortunately for lever fans, Ruger purchased Marlin out of bankruptcy in September 2020, and the company has thrown a lot of money and effort into ensuring that Marlin produces quality guns as in the past.

Marlin's newest model just introduced at this year's SHOT Show is the 1894 Classic, and it looks destined to be both a head turner and a crowd pleaser. Chambered in .44 Rem. Mag., the Model 1894 Classic sports a beautifully finished American black walnut straight stock and forend, both featuring clean, crisp checkering.

The receiver, lever and trigger guard plate are all CNC machined from alloy steel forgings. The receiver is blued with a satin finish, and the 20.25-inch barrel is made of alloy steel and is cold hammer forged for ultra-precise rifling to ensure exceptional

accuracy and a long life. Sights are of the adjustable semi-buckhorn variety for quick target acquisition, and the top of the receiver is drilled and tapped for scope or aperture sight mounting.

Of course, since the 1894 Classic is chambered for .44 Magnum, it can also chamber and shoot .44 Special ammunition. The tubular magazine, which features a loading gate on the receiver, will hold 10 rounds of .44 Mag. or 11 rounds of .44 Special ammo. A soft rubber butt pad on the rifle helps absorb recoil. The safety mechanisms consist of a positive, push-button cross-bolt manual safety and traditional half-cock trigger. The gun comes with sling swivel studs mounted and an offset hammer spur for easy cocking with an optic.

To be sure, this isn't a rifle that your customers would want to take on a long-range hunt in open country. But for lever-action lovers whose hunting is mostly close-up work in the woods, the 1894 Classic should make a fine companion. MSRP is \$1,239.



ROSSI R95 .45-70 TRAPPER

Rossi has been catering to lever-action enthusiasts with its lineup of pistol caliber rifles over the years, and now, it introduces a 45-70 Government chambering. Fans will know that the 45-70 chambering gained popularity in the 1800s for big, tough plains game like bison and grizzlies, and it's still got a following today. The round is popular among big woods whitetail hunters and bigger-game hunters alike.

To add a modern twist to a classic-looking gun in a classic chambering, the barrel on the R95 is threaded 5/8x24, to accommodate muzzle devices and suppressors. It's

also got the enlarged lever loop that's so popular today — easier to use with gloved hands when hunting in winter. The front sight is drift adjustable, and the gun features a Buckhorn adjustable rear sight. Capacity is five rounds.

This compact gun is 35 ½ inches overall, with a 16 ½-inch barrel with a 1:12 twist rate. Built on an alloy steel frame with a black oxide finish, the R95 also features a classic wood stock and a thumb safety. MSRP is \$1,060.99.





SMITH & WESSON 1854

While many people know of Smith & Wesson's storied history of producing fine revolvers during the "taming of the West," most don't know the company has a little lever-action rifle lore in its past. According to historians, the first Smith & Wesson company that was founded in 1854 and produced lever-action pistols before it was reorganized and renamed Volcanic Repeating Arms Company in 1855 produced about 10 lever-action rifles back in 1854-1855. Only three are known to have survived the ensuing years, with one on display at the Cody Firearms Museum in Wyoming.

Fast-forward 170 years, and the company is back in the lever-action rifle game with the new .44 Magnum-chambered Model 1854, celebrating the year of that first lever-action patent. With a stainless steel receiver and stainless steel 19.25-inch barrel, the rifle features a black synthetic stock with textured grip panels and black synthetic forend with M-Lok slots on the bottom. A removable tube magazine, so

designed to facilitate easier unloading without having to repeatedly work the lever, holds nine rounds.

A flat design allows a straight pull of the trigger, which the company says will break at about 10 pounds. The sighting system includes an XS Sights ghost-ring rear sight with a gold-bead front. The 1854 has an overall weight of 6.8 pounds, and overall length is 36 inches. The top of the receiver has a Picatinny rail for mounting optics, and for those who like to shoot suppressed, the barrel is threaded and comes with a thread cap installed.

A Limited Edition model of the 1854 wears a high-grade walnut stock and forend with a satin finish. Its stainless steel barrel and receiver have been given a polished black PVD finish. Both models also feature a large loop operating lever reminiscent of Marshal Rooster Cogburn's Winchester in the movie *True Grit*. MSRP is \$1,279 for the standard Model 1854 and \$3,499 for the limited edition.

HENRY LEVER ACTION SUPREME

Henry has been making lever-action rifles for 25 years, and the company has always done it very well. The company's new Lever Action Supreme, which has been in development for the past five years, is like nothing Henry has ever made before.

Chambered in 5.56 and 300 Blackout, the Supreme is a lever gun made to use standard AR-style magazines, far different from the typical tube-fed rifle. Built around an entirely new action with a half dozen pending patents, the gun has a slightly enlarged lever that yields a very smooth stroke to eject a shell and chamber another. In fact, according to Henry's George Thompson, "It is the slickest and smoothest action that we've ever made." The lever also has a fairly short throw compared to most lever-action rifles to make space for the magazine.

Another interesting twist that differentiates the guns from many in the lever-action market is the emphasis on accuracy. The gun features a match-grade, free-floated barrel — which the company calls "sub-MOA capable" — for maximum accuracy. And the adjustable match-grade trigger breaks at about 4 pounds, with a pound of adjustment available.

Unlike some companies making "modern" lever actions, Henry keeps its wood furniture, with the Supreme wearing a beautiful walnut stock and forend with attractive checkering on both. In another feature that breaks from typical lever rifles, the hammer is enclosed within the receiver. Plus, a rotating bolt head seals the chamber up nice and tight.

In keeping with the gun's modern features, the barrel is threaded for the use of a suppressor or other muzzle device. The Supreme has a tang safety, swivel studs front and rear for a sling, and it is drilled and tapped for mounting an optic. According to Henry, the new rifle will be the platform for other new introductions in the future. The Supreme should be shipping to retailers sometime in March, and MSRP is expected to be below \$1,400. **HR**

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Moultrie Mobile

Moultrie's feeders and trail cameras have been industry staples for years, and today the company's mobile features are leading the way into the future.



With a long history in the outdoor industry, Moultrie will be a familiar name to your customers, many of whom own or have owned one of the company's feeders or cameras. The company continues to grow, leading with its mobile technology to power its products. We talked to Heath Stanford, Moultrie Mobile's director of sales, about the brand and how it sees its products fitting into hunters' lives.

Can you talk about the company's history and its place in the industry today?

Dan Moultrie began making spin-

cast deer feeders in his apartment closet more than 40 years ago. He then went on to develop the first trail camera using a rat trap, a 35mm camera and a piece of string tied to a bear-bait barrel. In the 1990s, he developed the digital trail camera, and then in 2009, he began experimenting with the first cellular game camera. Today, Moultrie Mobile is a leader in the cellular trail camera and feeder market.

What sets Moultrie Mobile apart?

The Moultrie Mobile app and customer service. The Moultrie Mobile app is the one app you need for all of

your hunt planning. From artificial intelligence (AI) that allows customers to quickly sort through buck images, to localized deer-movement prediction forecasts, to historical deer movement patterns, to weather forecasting, to mapping with pins, property line, topo features and more — hunters can plan their entire hunt from one app.

Our customer service is second to none. Our customers purchase our cellular game cameras so that they can monitor and scout their remote properties, many of which are hours away. That's why customers can reach us on the phone seven days a week. The average time it takes our cus-

↑ Moultrie's cellular camera technology and accompanying app make the company a leader in the trail camera space.

tomers to reach one of our customer success members is 22 seconds. That's why so many customers post on social media and tell their friends that Moultrie Mobile's customer service is the best. Many of these customers have competitor cameras or were former users, and they tell us about their frustrations with trying to get through to other brands.





What specific category have you seen the most growth in recently? Any categories that are struggling or shifting to something else?

Our growth has been in the cellular game camera category. The market has been on a steep climb over the past several years. As camera and app technology has advanced, more and more SD camera users are making the switch to cellular. Once a customer tries one cellular camera, they buy more because they don't have to go to the camera and manually pull an SD card to view their images. The images are now served to them via the app on their smartphone or desktop.

Is there a specific product that's just on fire for you right now?

Our Edge cellular camera has exploded. It's the easiest camera on the market to activate and set up, doesn't require an SD card, and works on the four major U.S. cellular networks.

↑ The Moultrie Mobile app will change the way your customers manage their cameras and photos.

The best part is that everything happens automatically. When you turn the Edge on, it will automatically scan for the strongest cell signal out of the four networks, and it uses one SIM card, so there's nothing the customer must do. You also aren't pigeonholed into a camera that will only work on one network. The camera just works.

Where does Moultrie Mobile see the potential for growth? How about non-growth? Is there a part of the industry that's shrinking?

Moultrie Mobile is all about creating products that help solve problems for customers. We do this through cellular-connected devices. The cellular game camera has been our bread and butter and is continuing



↑ Solar panels make worrying about batteries a thing of the past.

to grow. However, we are adding this same connected technology to other products like feeders. The ability to monitor different products remotely is a game changer. Customers don't have to drive hours to check on feeders and cameras now, because they can do it on the Moultrie Mobile app from their home or anywhere. We'll look to expand on other products in the future as well.

What can we expect out of Moultrie Mobile in the second half of 2024? What products have you most excited for the future?

The second half of 2024 is going to be exciting for Moultrie Mobile. We'll be launching an industry-first technology called Feed Hub, a cell-connected feeder. With three dif-



↑ This year, Moultrie is introducing the Edge2 with Auto Connect technology — four cell networks, one SIM card.

ferent SKUs available, customers can install the Feed Hub in their existing spin-cast feeder, even if it's not a Moultrie feeder, or buy the pre-installed version in a Moultrie Pro Hunter II feeder kit. Once installed and activated, Feed Hub connects with the Moultrie Mobile app to show feed levels and battery life and allows all settings to be controlled remotely from anywhere. You can even feed on demand.

This summer we'll also be releasing the next generation of our popular Edge and Edge Pro cameras: The Edge 2 and Edge 2 Pro. Both cameras will have Auto Connect technology — four networks, one SIM card — that allows them to automatically find the strongest cell signal in the area. There's no SD card needed, either. Each camera will have



enhanced image and video quality as well as the new On Demand feature that allows the user to take a photo or video anytime and have it sent directly to the app. The Edge 2 Pro will feature onboard AI technology to eliminate false triggers and will also have built-in GPS to automatically pin your camera to the maps section of the Moultrie Mobile app.

What sort of product testing do you do?

Our products go through extensive internal and third-party testing during development. Then they are placed into our beta-testing program, where testers around the nation run them through stringent testing protocols to ensure exceptional function and reliability. All of our cameras carry a two-year warranty.

How does Moultrie support its dealers?

Our philosophy is we take care of our customers, so we are there all the way from sell-in to the sell-through process with our dealers. We listen to our consumers so we can help our dealers provide the right products at the right price at the right time. Each one of our dealers is an extension of our company, so we want to make sure they have everything they need to be successful in delivering a great shopping experience to their customers.

Do you have any advice for retailers about selling cell cameras and Moultrie Mobile products specifically?

Moultrie Mobile has built out a full product line, so the key is to carry our great-selling cameras while also supporting these cameras with power and mounting accessories. We believe an important aspect to providing a great customer experience is when



cell cameras are full of power and mounted in the right position. Our team is dedicated to help each of our dealers present our products in-store the best way possible, so we encourage each one of our dealers to reach out and work with us on how we can make the overall shopping experience better.

What's your personal favorite Moultrie Mobile product, and why?

The power accessories such as the 3.4W Solar Panel and Rechargeable

battery are incredible. My Moultrie Mobile cameras are set up 15 hours away on a ranch in Texas, and those two accessories help make it a worry-free process when it comes to making sure my cameras stay active and help me monitor not only my wildlife but also our front gate to see who is coming in and out of the ranch.

Is there anything you'd like retailers to know about Moultrie Mobile and its products?

← Solar and cellular technology aren't just for cameras — the mobile tech also allows users to control their feeders remotely and charge them with solar.

Moultrie Mobile is more than just a cell camera company. We are changing the game with our ecosystem of products for the total hunting experience. We are building a best-in-class team that continues to push the envelope on innovation and challenge the traditional norms. We work through our retail partners to provide best-in-class products that exceed the customers' expectations.

Moultrie Mobile can take care of the customer who is simply looking for a reliable cell camera to deliver pictures to their phone, but we can also take care of the customer who wants to totally plan their hunt using our game-changing features like Game Plan, built into the Moultrie Mobile App. When we are able to partner with our retailers, we can produce amazing results — and we are just getting started. **HR**





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8 Great Air Rifles to Inflate Your Sales

Air rifles are hotter than ever, and more capable than you might have realized.

BY KEVIN REESE

More than 2,000 years ago, Ctesibius stayed busy inventing in Greece, often with compressed air. Roman engineer Vitruvius mentioned Ctesibius air-inventions, including a catapult capable of shooting arrows. Unfortunately, the technology didn't stick, and we wouldn't see an airgun invention come to fruition again until late in the 16th century. Airgun popularity for hunting as well as combat grew from mid-17th century through the 19th century — case in point, the Girandoni .46-caliber air rifle used by Lewis and Clark to hunt and show superior firepower to natives throughout their famed expedition spanning 1803 to 1806. Captain Lewis' air rifle is mentioned 39 times throughout 13 volumes of the Lewis & Clark journal.

While airguns remained popular as hunting tools through the 19th century, big-bore hunting air rifles dropped off to the extent many Americans were disconnected from the history of big-bore airgun hunting for larger game, and ethics debates increased. Fortunately, with advocates like Chip Hunnicutt, Justin “JB” Biddle, Eydin Hansen, American Airgunner's Rossi Morreale, High Road Hunting's Keith and Matti Warren, Abby Casey and others leading charges in various channels, big-bore airgun hunting legality and popularity have experienced a resurgence. The popularity of big-bore airgun hunting has never been higher, and customers are looking to retailers for answers and offerings. As such, here are eight great airguns to inflate your sales.





Umarex Air Javelin Fishr

Founded by Wulf-Heinz Pflaumer and Franz Wonisch in 1972 and headquartered in Arnsberg, North Rhine-Wesphalia, Germany, Umarex grew roots as a manufacturer of blank-firing pistols and soon after grew to be a premier exporter of airguns. In 1993, Umarex acquired Carl Walther GmbH and, in 2006, it established Umarex USA. In its early years, Umarex USA manufactured its own airguns along with many other air-powered rifles and pistols under brands like Walther, Hammerli, Beretta, Colt, Smith & Wesson and others. Today, Umarex is considered an industry leader in performance pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) air rifles, including big-bore and arrow-firing iterations. For 2024, Umarex ventured into new territory, bowfishing, with the Air Javelin Fishr.

Like the AirSaber and Air Javelins but designed specifically for bowfishing adventures, the Umarex Air Javelin Fishr shoots a proprietary bowfishing arrow up to 100 fps. A major concern with previous attempts to design an arrow-launching firearm platform for bowfishing, i.e., a crossbow, is volume of shooting. Taking 50 or more shots while bowfishing is pretty common, making crossbow bowfishing quite tedious; in fact, it's simply not a great fit. The Air Javelin Fishr solves this elephant-in-the-room problem with a high-volume shooting solution. A single 4500-psi air charge powers the Fishr through up to 65 shots! Of course, you do need to understand local bowfishing regulations. Some states may not allow bowfishing with a PCP air-bow system.



Umarex Hammer

With several years of big-game hunting success under its belt, the Umarex Hammer is still considered one of the most popular big-bore bolt-action air rifles on today's market. The Umarex Hammer is chambered in .50-caliber and delivers a muzzle velocity of 760 fps with a 550-grain .510 slug. Where physics matters and numbers don't lie, the Umarex Hammer absolutely does hammer enough hard-hitting energy (705 ft./

lbs.) to take down big game. Even better, shots are comfortable given the Hammer's push-type recoil impulse and a noise level conducive to shooting without hearing protection. The Hammer features a composite chassis, Picatinny scope base, two-round magazine for a quick follow-up shot, dual air chamber and a 2.5-pound trigger.



Airforce Airguns TalonBolt

Established in 1994 by John McCaslin, Airforce Airguns' first industry-leading claim to fame was production of the popular Talon Air Rifle, followed by inventing the world's most powerful .22-caliber air rifle, the Condor, in 2004. In 2015, the Fort Worth-based company landed another industry record with the Texan. The Airforce Airguns Texan was the most powerful big-bore air rifle in the world, delivering a 50-caliber muzzle velocity of over 1,000 fps, and more than 650 ft./lbs. of energy. Of course, Airforce Airguns continues to innovate and, in 2023, they unveiled the TalonBolt.

The TalonBolt is a PCP airgun designed to launch 18-inch, 400-grain, carbon-fiber bolts (commonly called arrows) at more than 400 fps. Lightweight at 5.3 pounds and perfectly sized for hunting at just 40 inches in length, the TalonBolt is comfortable to carry on long treks while also offering multiple bolt-shots on a single 2,000 psi charge. Of course, shooters can adjust velocity up for big-game hunting or down for bowfishing. The TalonBolt features a 2.5-pound, adjustable, two-stage trigger and includes a side-mounting quiver with three bolts.





Airforce Airguns TexanLSS CF Series

Still touted by Airforce Airguns as the world's most powerful PCP big-bore air rifle, the Texan, introduced in 2015, remains one of the most popular air rifles in the industry. Of course, the Texan line continues to expand and now is included in the company's CF (carbon-fiber) Series. The latest, and perhaps most popular in the CF Series, the TexanLSS is a perfect addition to the iconic lineup. The Airforce Airguns Texan

LSS CF Series Air Rifle boasts a .510-caliber Lothar Walther barrel, adjustable power, low-effort side lever cocking, adjustable two-stage trigger and a 490cc air tank with a fill capacity of 3625 psi. For demanding airgunners, The TexanLSS CF Series Air Rifle is a great mid- to big-game hunting air rifle capable of pushing .50-caliber slugs up to 1,100 fps with up to 800 ft./lbs. of energy and weighing in at just 8 pounds.



FX Airguns DRS Classic

Based in Mariestad, Sweden, FX Airguns was founded in 1999 by Fredrik Axelsson with the vision of providing discriminating shooters with world-class production air rifles. According to FXAirguns.com, Axelsson, an airgun enthusiast himself, simply set out to find the best air rifle. When he couldn't find it, he built it. Twenty-five years later, FX Airguns certainly is considered by many airgunners to be the one brand to chase. While FX Airguns caters to precision shooters, the 2024 DRS Classic Airgun, offered in .177-, .22- and .25-caliber models, is a perfect choice for small-game hunters.

The magazine-fed, bolt-action FX Airguns DRS Classic is available in a few stock styles — soft-touch synthetic, Minelli walnut standard and Minelli Grade 2 with rose-wood tip — and features an over-the-barrel air reservoir with an air capacity of 3,335 psi, as well as an adjustable trigger. With respect to PCP air rifles, the DRS Classic offers the highest number of repeatably accurate shots on a single charge with 66 shots (.177), 60 shots (.22) and 45 shots (.25). Respective muzzle velocities are 920 fps, 915 fps and 880 fps. The charging style is a pin-probe style MkIII and the DRS Classic includes an externally adjustable AMP MkII Regulator.

The magazine-fed, bolt-action FX Airguns DRS Classic is available in a few stock



Benjamin M600 Airbow

Representing the oldest brand in the roundup, Walter R. Benjamin jumped into air-guns way back in 1882 with a patented .22-caliber pump-action pneumatic rifle capable of slinging pellets at a blistering 400 fps. Benjamin continued innovating and fine-tuning his air rifles and established Benjamin Air Rifles in 1902. In 1977, Benjamin acquired Sheridan Products. Fifteen years later, Crosman acquired Benjamin, and in 2018, Crosman Corporation rebranded as Velocity Outdoors. The company houses eight brands; however, Benjamin Air Rifles remains a premium performance air rifle brand. For 2024 and a perfect fit for the trend of air-powered arrow launchers, Benjamin Air Rifles unveiled the M600 Airbow.

Unveiled in the summer of 2023 and showcased publicly at the 2024 SHOT Show, the Benjamin M600 Airbow is a perfect mid-size to big-game PCP hunting solution. Capitalizing on the original Airbow platform, the M600 sits on the first-generation chassis yet boasts a blistering muzzle velocity of over 600 fps with a 375-grain bolt (arrow) and 300 ft./lbs. of energy, devastating for even the largest big-game animals — in the world of physics, numbers never lie. The Airbow M600 includes a quiver and three bolts.





Seneca Dragon Claw II Dual Tank Air Rifle

Air Venturi, a company recognized worldwide as “one-stop shop for all things air-guns,” was established in 2010 and remains a top-tier distributor and airgun manufacturer today. Among Air Venturi’s airgun product lines, Seneca is touted as Air Venturi’s premier, heritage-styled hunting air rifle line. An upgrade to the Seneca Dragon Claw, a second-generation Dragon Claw II Dual Tank Air Rifle is an excellent choice for airgun hunting enthusiasts looking for serious knock-down power; in fact, iconic hunting personalities Keith and Matti Warren both took cape buffalo with the first-genera-

tion Seneca Dragon Claw.

Boasting dual air tanks with 500cc total air capacity, the Seneca Dragon Claw II is a single-shot big-bore PCP air rifle chambered in .50-caliber that is designed to shoot slugs as well as Air Bolts (specially designed arrows). Muzzle velocities for each are 860 fps with 336-grain slugs and over 600 fps with Air Bolts. The Dragon Claw II features a fill capacity of 3,000 psi in dual chambers, checkered forend and grip, adjustable rear sight and fixed front sight, and a rich, hardwood, Monte Carlo stock.



AEA Zeus

Part of the Wolfiek Group headquartered in Barcelona, Spain, AEA Airguns is a premium PCP air rifle producer with more than 15 years in the industry. Currently, AEA Airguns produces bolt-action, semi-automatic and select-fire air rifles. AEA’s most popular air rifle, purportedly the latest record holder for the world’s most powerful airgun, is the Zeus 72-caliber bolt-action PCP air rifle.

The Zeus is aptly named (after the king of the Greek gods). Available in .58- and .72-caliber models, the latter is the most popular and boasts up to 900 fps muzzle

velocity with 1,500 ft./lbs. of energy from an 820-grain bullet. That said, Zues has a commanding presence at 50 inches long with a 32-inch barrel and weighing in at 11.6 pounds without an optic. Max fill capacity is 4,500 psi and pushes up to three shots with repeatable accuracy before noticeably diminished velocity. The latest generation of Zeus sports a rich walnut Monte Carlo-style stock, blued barrel and receiver, side-cocking action and a Picatinny scope base.

Umarex ReadyAir Airgun Compressor

A major point of contention for PCP airgun enthusiasts is the lack of air filling opportunities, especially inland and throughout the central and northern U.S. where dive shops are scarce. For many years, as a hunting-airgun enthusiast living in rural Texas, I traveled as far as a hundred miles or more to fill air tanks. The term may be cliché, but it fits — for me, living in north-central Texas, the Umarex ReadyAir Airgun Compressor was a game changer. Today, I fill my air rifles whenever and wherever I please.

The Umarex ReadyAir Airgun Compressor is a portable, oil- and water-free air-filling station. Built to cater to high-powered PCP air rifles, the ReadyAir Airgun Compressor is capable of filling air reservoirs to a max of 4500 psi using standard 110-volt or mobile 12-volt power supplies. The ReadyAir Compressor features digital auto-shut-off controls for custom-set air pressures as well as temperature protection. Designed for use on the go, the ReadyAir includes a high-pressure hose, 12-volt cables, 110-volt power cable and a maintenance kit.



Welcome to the World of Digital Finance

How we handle money — or don't handle it at all — has changed tremendously in the past decade. Have you kept up?

BY MARK E. BATTERSBY

Many hunting-industry retailers are in danger of falling behind, becoming less profitable and losing customers as today's business world becomes increasingly technical in nature. The transformation of traditional financing and banking using the new technologies are increasingly providing the services needed today.

In the area of finance, the use of digital tools and technologies automate and streamline financial processes, improve data accuracy and consistency, and enhance financial analysis and reporting capabilities. They also improve customer relations and increase sales.





DIGITAL FINANCE

Digital finance describes the continuing transformation of the financial marketplace, a transformation that affects banks and financial institutions as well as those whose businesses rely on them. Digital finance is increasing the speed and agility of financial transactions and reducing transaction costs significantly.

A key element of digital finance uses digital products and tools, including online and mobile banking to deliver financial services. How is the trend toward digital finance affecting the way those in the hunting industry operate?

Using computers and mobile phones, hunting-industry retailers can access their bank accounts, verify account details, transfer funds, deposit cash, pay bills and more. And, don't forget those ATMs that have reduced the time taken to withdraw money from banks.

Among the examples of digital finance are:

- **Mobile banking.** Mobile or online banking helps the hunting-industry retailer and its customers conduct banking transactions, transfer funds, pay bills and more by using mobile phones and computers.

- **FinTech solutions:** FinTech companies provide a variety of digital services, from tracking spending, budgeting, to customer service “chatbots” and more offered to end users, such as those in the hunting industry.

- **Digital wallets.** A “digital wallet” is a type of financial transaction app that runs on any connected device. It securely stores the payment information and passwords of the business as well as streamlining customer payments.

- **Blockchain technology.** Another technology boosting digitalization in finance is blockchain. Blockchain is a type of shared database that differs

istock photo



from a typical database in the way it stores information. Different types of information can be stored on a blockchain and shared with other parties. This is helpful for much regulatory compliance, money laundering protection and, of course, peer-to-peer transactions.

BENEFITTING FROM DIGITAL FINANCE

Advances in technology, coupled with innovation, are being leveraged to identify opportunities to digitize a hunting-industry retailer's financial processes and supplement the digital tools and technologies it uses to improve its efficiency and accuracy.

Among the many benefits of digital finance are:

- **More efficiency.** Digital tools were created to help businesses work more efficiently by removing manual time-consuming work from the operation's normal business activities.
- **Increased security.** The finance industry is subject to security and compliance requirements, with good reason. They often process and handle sensitive and confidential information. It's a similar story for most retailers. Using the built-in finance automation tools adopted by banks and other financial institutions



support the security needs of the businesses utilizing those tools.

- **Improved customer experience.** Customers nowadays expect a digital, smooth experience by default. Their interactions should be effortless and at their own convenience. With the market becoming more competitive, every business, large and small, needs to invest in digital tools to keep their customers satisfied and provide the level of service expected by them.
- **Insights & analysis.** Decentralized technologies provide transpar-

ency and enable the tracking and analysis of the hunting-industry retailer's financial data in real-time rather than waiting for reports from its professionals.

THE BASIS OF DIGITAL FINANCE

The term "Digital Business" refers to the use of digital technology to transform the way businesses operate. Today, almost every business has access to and the ability to handle large amounts of data. Unfortunately, without the tools to analyze that data, it is not of much help.

Digital finance tools provide solutions based on that data and can be used to identify less expensive alternatives, business opportunities and growth possibilities. On a similar note, although the terms "Digital Finance" and "Digital Banking" are sometimes used synonymously, there is a difference. While digital finance affects the entire financial industry and those who rely on it, digital banking is usually refers to the processing of banking transactions.

Digital banking is not a new

↑ Digital finance comes with plenty of benefits — it's efficient and secure, and it allows for real-time analysis.

concept. However, recent events have significantly increased the use of online banking for transactions such as online payments and fund transfers. Digital banking includes all financial services that are carried out online or on mobile devices. These include e-banking, mobile banking apps or payment apps.

Digital finance does not merely affect bank customers — it includes all areas connected with finance and the transformation process brought about by digitalization. This has spurred the emergence of so-called "challenger banks."

A challenger bank is a fully digital bank with no physical branches. They challenge traditional banks by making the customer experience smoother — from the ease of opening an account or applying for that often difficult-to-obtain funding to more attractive terms, fees and rates.

"Today, almost every business has access to and the ability to handle large amounts of data. Unfortunately, without the tools to analyze that data, it is not of much help."



DIGITAL FINANCING

Digital finance is the delivery of traditional financial services digitally, through computers, tablets and smartphones. That includes financing the hunting-industry retail operation.

Most businesses use equity or debt financing or a combination of the two. Equity financing involves receiving funds from an investor in exchange for partial ownership of the operation. Debt financing, on the other hand, involves borrowing money from a third party, which is then repaid with interest. And, it is the debt financing segment of the digitalization transformation that is leading the way today. Online lenders have become popular, especially for businesses and their owners struggling with reluctant lenders or bad credit. With an online or alternative lender, bad credit or restrictive policies are not always a barrier to getting the needed financing. In fact, strong, positive cash flow generally matters far more to alternative lenders than credit ratings or the restrictive industry policies of traditional lenders.

Alternative lenders are an option when the bank says no. Online lenders offer fast cash, with a number able to process funding requests within 24 hours. Financial technology, or FinTech, interacts with a major bank minus the human element or is offered by independent companies working outside traditional banks.

Online lenders eliminate the middleman, such as banks, to connect borrowers with individuals and institutional investors. Somewhat unregulated, so-called funding “platforms” are an increasingly popular door to Internet financing.

PLATFORMS FOR DIGITAL FINANCE

Banks, credit unions and other financial institutions are increasingly

using digital banking platforms to give their customers online channels for conducting traditional banking processes and activities. A majority of banking services can be digitized with the right solution provider.

Digital banks are a unique type of FinTech entity. They offer many of the same banking services of a tradi-



tional bank, but the main difference is they don't have physical branches. In other words, digital banking platforms offer financial services that are provided solely online as opposed to traditional, brick-and-mortar banks.

DIGITALIZATION AND DIGITAL FINANCE

Digital finance offers quite a few benefits to every growing retail business. Thanks to digitalization, bank accounts can be opened within minutes and banking transactions accomplished around the clock,

regardless of branch operating hours. What's more, many banking services are being digitalized — by partners within the financial arena.

Whether using digital tools and technologies to improve financial analysis and the increasing number of reporting requirements, or utilizing tools such as digital payments or

is often the preferred way of doing business. This, however, may be changing, as the previously postponed rules requiring third-party payment providers such as PayPal and others to report all transactions in excess of \$5,000 in 2024.

And, then, there is cryptocurrency. Cryptocurrency is a digital currency, Bitcoin being the most well-known example, that uses cryptography for security. It is uncontrolled by a central authority, such as a government or financial institution.

Considered to be the wave of the future, cryptocurrencies have drawn the attention of the IRS. The IRS considers cryptocurrencies to be digital assets that are treated as property. In other words, all general property tax rules, as complex and ever-changing as they are, also apply to cryptocurrencies.

DIGITALIZATION 2024 STYLE

Digitalization, the process of adopting digital technology, is rapidly impacting on the funding and financial services so important to hunting-industry retailers. It has become a buzzword, with businesses realizing the benefits of digital technology for improving business operations, increasing productivity and driving growth.

The variety of products, applications, processes and business models that constitute today's digitalization, especially the segment labeled as “Digital Finance,” are already having an impact on many within the hunting industry.

For a hunting-industry retailer, adopting digital finance and integrating digital technology in all areas of their business, fundamentally changing how they do business, can mean improved customer service and can offer increased efficiency and, above all, reduced operating costs. **HR**

↑ Cash is making a bit of a comeback, but cryptocurrencies are considered to be the wave of the future.

.....
online financing, keep in mind that they come with a number of potential pitfalls and some degree of risk.

DON'T FORGET CASH AND CRYPTO

Cash, surprisingly, is enjoying a comeback. From a point where many merchants were refusing to accept cash payments, to today where cash



Five Marketing Trends to Know



In the ever-changing world of marketing, several current trends could have a positive impact on your business.

BY JUDY KNEISZEL

Once upon a time, a hunting retailer could place an ad in the Yellow Pages, slap a logo and phone number on a billboard and call it a marketing plan.

Today, new marketing opportunities abound. Here are some trending marketing practices that might be worth adopting to give your business a boost:

1. MOBILE FIRST. The number of web searches done on mobile devices is at least 50% and growing, according to Google. Optimize websites and other digital content to be viewed on mobile devices. Make sure content can be viewed and performs equally well across all devices — desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones — by hiring

a web developer who can optimize your website and emails for mobile devices first, and then consider other platforms.

Optimizing content for mobile devices means understanding the conditions under which people use their smartphones and devices. Consider, for example, how long it takes under average conditions to load a



page over a mobile network. Insist that when your information is viewed on a mobile device, the viewer can call your company with a single click.

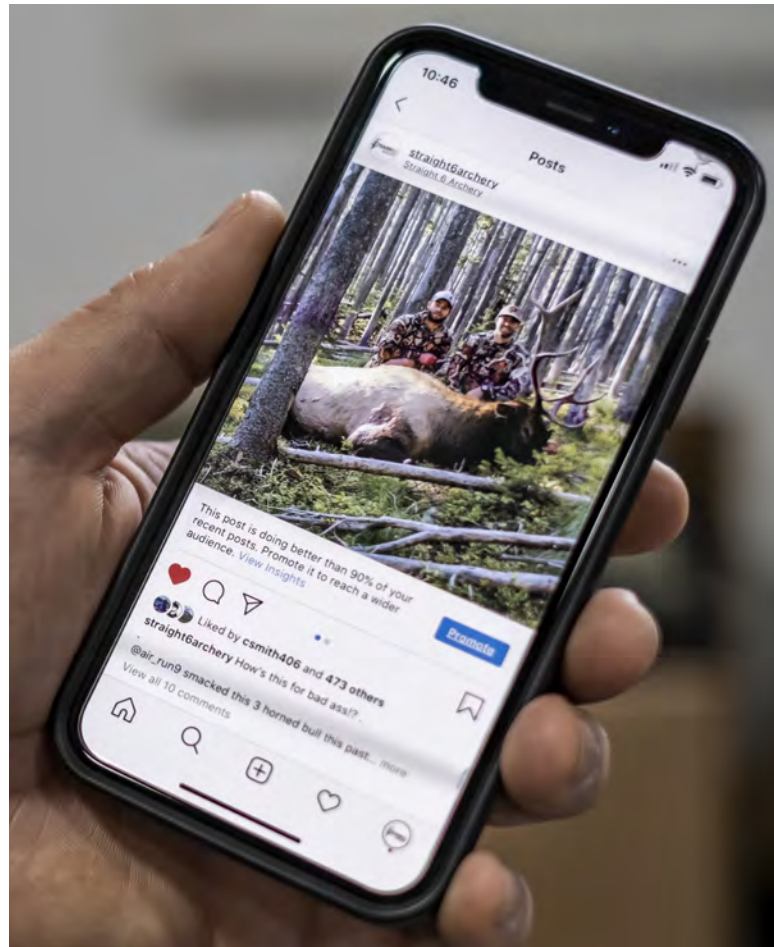
In general, personal computers are used for research, but mobile devices are used for action. If someone asks Apple's Siri for a sporting goods store in their area, odds are they are serious about finding one and will take action, so make it easy for them. And if you really want to get into mobile marketing, the next step may be location-based marketing, which uses technology to determine where your customers are so you can connect and interact with them on their mobile devices in real time.

2. LIVE VIDEO. Facebook has made live video streaming simple for anyone to do. How can you go live to market your company? It's as simple as streaming a short clip of a sales associate showing off a new jacket or your gunsmith disassembling a shotgun.

What do you accomplish? You've reminded your Facebook followers about the services you provide and given them a look at your work. It's also an ego boost for your employees to know you're bragging about their hard work.

Be sure to zoom in on the company logo and phone number in the store, if possible. Why take the time to go live? Because you have nothing to lose — all of this trendy marketing is absolutely free.

3. PERSONALIZED MARKETING. It's easy for consumers to get lost in the sea of marketing messages they encounter every minute of every day. That's why marketers are increasing their use of data collection, analysis and automation technology to provide individualized content to potential customers. That may not be possible for a small company lacking in IT staff, but don't underestimate



↑ Mobile-first, live video and voice searching were all but unheard of a decade or two ago but are common now, thanks to smartphone use.

the personalized touches you are able to provide.

If customers have trusted your company enough to share contact information, they will appreciate individual attention, which can inspire or deepen loyalty. Ironically, in this age of sophisticated, data-driven digital marketing, personalized or one-to-one marketing like a direct phone call, an email addressing an individual decision-maker by name, or a face-to-face meeting can be a refreshing, memorable marketing tool.

4. PURPOSE-DRIVEN MARKETING.

Have you noticed there are more ads today that tell a story? These ads don't just describe the product or service being promoted; they tell why a company does what it does or how it makes the world a better place. Attempting to establish an identity as a business with a conscience is sometimes called purpose-driven marketing.

Young people especially want to do business with companies that give back. While consumers can spot a phony message a mile off, you may benefit from a well-crafted message touting company efforts to be environmentally responsible or actively supportive of the community.

5. INCREASED VOICE SEARCHING. Voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Apple Siri, and Google Assistant get

"Why take the time to go live? You have nothing to lose — all of this trendy marketing is absolutely free."

asked a lot of questions these days. Make sure your website content includes key words and phrases that answer questions potential customers would ask to find a hunting retailer. How are voice searches different? Consider this: If you wanted to know the name of the tallest U.S. president and you were at your desktop computer, you'd probably type, "tallest U.S. president." If you were asking Siri, however, you'd likely say, "Who was the tallest U.S. president?" The difference may seem negligible, but it can actually make a difference in search results.

UPDATE THE MENU

Not every marketing technique works for everyone. What's most effective varies from day to day, company to company and customer to customer. Marketing is constantly evolving, and if you want your company to remain relevant and grow, it's in your best interest to keep up on the trends. Don't abandon the tried-and-true, but occasionally review your marketing plan and implement some fresh ideas. After all, if no one ever upgraded their marketing efforts, consumers would still be getting all their information from cave paintings. **HR**



Hunting Over-and-Unders

Over-and-under shotguns come in a huge variety of price points and configurations. What should you be stocking?

BY JARROD SPILGER

While pump and semi-auto shotguns are popular with many bird hunters, over-and-under double guns have some distinct advantages. Chief among these is the availability of two different choke options. Upland hunters are especially fond of having a more open choke in one barrel for the first, flushing shot and a tighter choke in the other barrel for the second, parting shot. The same concept applies to waterfowl, although sometimes the first shot is farther and second shot is closer as ducks approach the decoys. Turkey hunters can also benefit from having two constriction choices at their disposal. If a tom hangs up at 40 yards, fire the tighter barrel. If he sneaks in close, hit him with the more forgiving, open choke.

Older doubles had fixed chokes, but most modern over-and-unders are threaded for screw-in choke tubes, making the constriction combinations almost limitless. Other advantages of double-barrels include two very fast, reliable shots, as well as the ability to quickly break open the shotgun for safely crossing fences or other obstacles.

The greatest benefit, though, may be that many hunters simply like the feel and look of an over-and-under. Even the more affordable models convey a sense of class that pumps and semi-autos just can't compete with. For all these reasons, it's a good idea to have a selection of stack-barreled shotguns on your shelves for customers to choose from.



MOSSBERG

Best known for its pumps and semi-autos, Mossberg also has a line of affordable yet high-quality imported over-and-unders. According to Linda Powell, director of media relations for Mossberg, the Gold Reserve Black Label and Silver Reserve Eventide are two great choices retailers should consider carrying. Both are available in 12- and 20-gauge with 3-inch chambers.

The Gold Reserve Black Label features a Grade-A walnut stock and 30-inch barrels with a set of five extended choke tubes. The Silver Reserve Eventide is a no-nonsense, all-purpose scattergun with a matte blue finish, black synthetic stock, and 26-inch (20-gauge) or 28-inch (12-gauge) barrels with five flush-fitting chokes.

New for 2024 are the Eventide Waterfowl and Turkey models. Hardcore fowlers will

appreciate the 12-gauge Waterfowl model with 3.5-inch chambers, Patriot Brown Cerakote finish on the receiver and 28-inch barrels, Mossy Oak Shadowgrass camo finish on the synthetic stock and forearm, and five flush chokes. Turkey models are available in 12-, 20-, and 28-gauge, all with 20-inch barrels and full-coverage Mossy Oak Greenleaf camo. Each also comes with three extended choke tubes — two extra-full and one improved cylinder for close-range shots. The 12-gauge has 3 1/2-inch chambers, while the 20- and 28-gauge have 3-inch chambers, allowing hunters to take advantage of recent advancements in magnum small-bore turkey loads. MSRP: \$1,135 Black Label, \$756 Eventide, \$956 Eventide Waterfowl, \$927 Eventide Turkey.

www.mossberg.com





FABARM ELOS D2

FABARM

Fabarm offers some exceptionally well-made Italian shotguns. When asked if the company works frequently with small retailers, marketing director Shaun Burkowski answered, "Yes, absolutely! We are dealer direct and do not work with distributors. Most, if not all, of our dealers are smaller, independent shops."

Fabarm has an extensive lineup of high-quality semi-autos and doubles, but for those looking for a true hunting over-and-under, Burkowski recommends the Elos

D2. It has a beautiful nickel-plated receiver and Turkish walnut stock. 12-, 20-, and 28-gauge models are available, all with 28-inch blued barrels and a MSRP of \$3,250. Left-hand stocks are available for a nominal extra fee. Five chokes are included, and the barrels feature Fabarm's TRIBORE HP tapered bore for improved patterns. The 12- and 20-gauge models have 3-inch chambers, while the 28-gauge has 2 3/4-inch chambers. www.fabarmusa.com

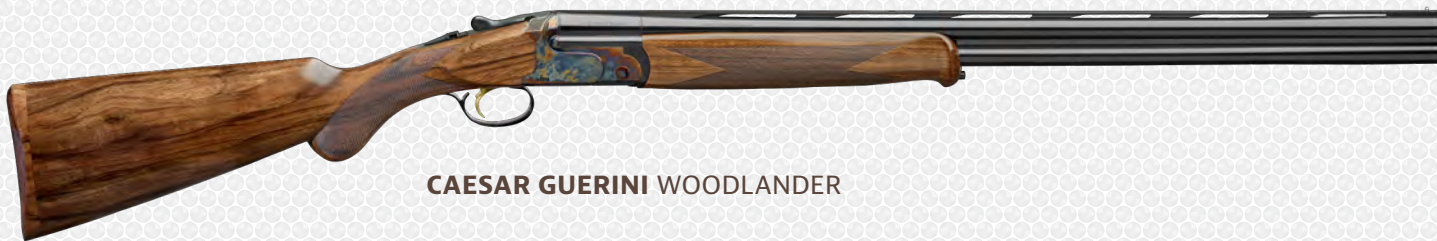


SYREN ELOS D2

SYREN

Fabarm's sister company offers the Syren line of shotguns with stock dimensions and features designed specifically for female shooters. Burkowski again suggests the Elos D2, although Syren's version, while similar, is different than Fabarm's. The receiver is case colored, not nickel, and the Turkish walnut stock has a lustrous Triwood finish

instead of matte. It's available in only 20- and 28-gauge, both with 3-inch chambers, 28-inch TRIBORE HP barrels, and five chokes. MSRP is slightly higher at \$3,450, with the left-hand stock option again costing a bit extra. Carrying shotguns that fit female customers will set your store apart from other area shops. www.syrenusa.com



CAESAR GUERINI WOODLANDER

CAESAR GUERINI

Caesar Guerini is the parent company of both Fabarm and Syren. Retailers might also want to consider carrying the Woodlander, Caesar Guerini's entry-level field over-and-under. MSRP is \$4,695, but it comes with a lifetime warranty and Caesar Guerini's PitStop Program, where original owners can send in their firearm for a free tune-up.

The Woodlander is available in 12- and 28-gauge with 28-inch barrels and 20-gauge with 26-inch barrels, all with 3-inch chambers, a case colored receiver, and five chokes. www.gueriniusa.com





BENELLI 828U NICKEL

BENELLI

Famous for its semi-autos, Italian gunmaker Benelli also offers over-and-unders, as do its sister companies, Franchi and Stoeger. To become a qualifying dealer of Benelli's family of firearms, retailers must go to the respective websites, click on Support, then Contact Us, fill in their contact details, and select Becoming a Stocking Dealer under Topic. An area rep will contact them.

For dealers that qualify, there's the Benelli 828 U, available in 3-inch 12-gauge with an anodized blue receiver or 3-inch 12- and 20-gauge with an engraved nickel-plated receiver. Barrel lengths are 26-, 28-, or 30-inches for 12-gauge and 26- or 28-inches for 20-gauge. Five chokes are provided. The Progressive Comfort system inside the satin walnut stock nicely mitigates recoil. MSRP varies. www.benelliusa.com



FRANCHI INSTINCT SL

FRANCHI

Franchi offers an even wider variety of over-and-unders in its Instinct line. One of the top-sellers is the Instinct SL with a lightweight aluminum alloy receiver, Prince of Wales grip, satin-walnut stock, and three extended chokes. It's available in five

gauges: 12, 16, 20, 28, and .410, all with 28-inch barrels, plus 26-inch for the 20-gauge. MSRP for each is \$1,799. www.franchiusa.com



STOEGER CONDOR FIELD, 28-GAUGE

STOEGER CONDOR LONGFOWLER

STOEGER

Stoeger's affordable Condor Field over-and-unders are great for hunters on a budget. The 3-inch 12- or 20-gauge models have 26- or 28-inch barrels, while 2 ¾-inch 28-gauge and compact .410-bore models have 26-inch barrels. Longfowler models, available in 3-inch 12- or 20-gauge, have 30-inch barrels. All have walnut stocks.

There's also a black synthetic 3-inch 12-gauge model with 28-inch barrels. All come with IC and modified choke tubes (extended on Longfowler), except the .410, which has fixed full chokes. MSRP is \$499 wood, \$329 black synthetic. www.stoegerindustries.com





BROWNING CYNERGY CX COMPOSITE



BROWNING CYNERGY ULTIMATE TURKEY



BROWNING CYNERGY WICKED WING AURIC



BROWNING CYNERGY CX

BROWNING

Browning offers several over-and-unders, but hunters will be most interested in the Cynergy CX line. The CX Composite is available in 3-inch 12-gauge with an adjustable synthetic stock, while the wood-stocked CX is available in 3-inch 12- or 20-gauge. Barrel lengths are 28, 30, or 32 inches for 12-gauge, 28 or 30 inches for 20-gauge. Three extended chokes are included, and barrels have a 60/40 point of impact, considered ideal for bird hunting.

There's also the 3 ½-inch 12-gauge Cynergy Ultimate Turkey, available with 24- or 26-inch barrels, five chokes including extended Ultimate Full Turkey and Spreader tubes, adjustable synthetic stock, and full-coverage Mossy Oak camo. For waterfowl-

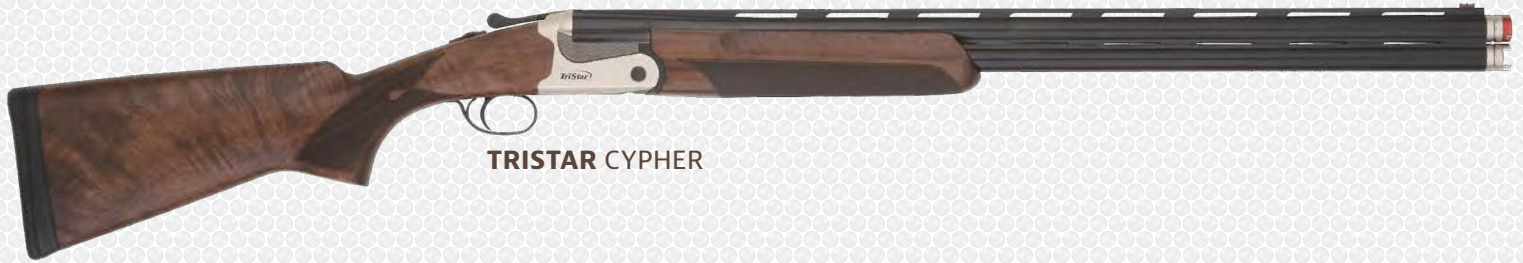
ers, there's the 12-gauge Cynergy Wicked Wing, again with 3 ½-inch chambers and choice of 26-, 28-, or 30-inch barrels. Three extended Goose Band chokes are included. The synthetic stock and forearm come in a variety of camo patterns, while the receiver and barrels have a tough Burnt Bronze Cerakote finish.

To become an authorized Browning dealer, retailers must have a storefront and make qualified orders each year. However, there can not be another Browning dealer within a certain number of miles. For details, call 801-876-2711 and an area sales rep will get in touch. MSRP is \$1,979.99 Composite, \$2,079.99 wood, \$2,649.99 Turkey, and \$2,579.99 Wicked Wing. www.browning.com





TRISTAR SETTER S/T 12-GAUGE



TRISTAR CYPHER



TRISTAR HUNTER MAG II



TRISTAR TRINITY II

TRISTAR

For customers looking to purchase their first double gun, or those simply shopping for an affordable shotgun, there are TriStar over-and-unders. TriStar's president, Ryan Bader, says the company sells directly to dealers through Buying Group Channels, a co-op of sorts that allows smaller retailers to combine their resources to match the buying power of larger retailers and get better prices. "Even though it's a two-step distribution process, dealers can call us directly with questions," assured Bader. "We're a tight-knit community."

Bader says TriStar's top-selling over-and-under is the Setter and its variants. "We've sold close to 100,000 over the past 15 years," he noted. The Setter S/T (single trigger) is available in gauges 12, 20, 28, and .410, all with 28-inch barrels except 26-inches for the 20-gauge, and 3-inch chambers, except 2 ¾-inch for the 28-gauge.

Five chokes are included. MSRP is \$655 for 12- and 20-gauge, \$685 for 28-gauge and .410-bore.

Other popular models include the Trinity II and Cypher. Both are available in gauges 12, 16, 20, 28, and .410, all with 28-inch barrels and five choke tubes, which are extended for the Cypher. MSRP for 12, 16, and 20 is \$855 Trinity II, \$960 Cypher, and for the 28 and .410 is \$870 Trinity II, \$975 Cypher.

Hardcore hunters will appreciate the Hunter Mag II line of 12-gauges with 3 ½-inch chambers, synthetic stocks, and five chokes. The turkey model has 26-inch barrels and Mossy Oak Breakup camo, while the waterfowl models come with 28-inch barrels and a variety of camo and Cerakote finishes. MSRP is \$885 full camo, \$915 camo and Cerakote. www.tristarms.com



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20 CARTRIDGES



A detailed photograph of hunting equipment. In the upper left, a portion of a rifle with a wooden stock and ornate silver metalwork is visible. Below it, several brass bullets of various calibers are arranged on a surface that appears to be an old, colorful map. To the right, a brown leather pouch with white stitching is open, showing more bullets inside. The background is a soft-focus animal print, likely a zebra or giraffe.

Choosing the Right Bullet

It's not as simple as grabbing a box of .270 off the shelf. Today, you need to be able to educate customers on the different projectile options in factory ammo.

BY DAVID REARICK

On the surface, selecting a box of .30-06 ammunition for a new rifle seems like a simple task for most buyers. Ammo shortages aside, the reality is, for popular calibers like the .30-06, the sheer number of choices can be overwhelming. As a retailer, knowing the differences between a partition and soft point and asking the right questions will take out the complexity and create an easy sale. While all manufacturers offer their own unique flavors and combinations, a solid understanding of the basics goes a long way to confidently helping a buyer make the right decision.



BULLET TYPES

Focusing on rifle ammunition, bullet choices can be broken down into two categories: copper jacketed lead and solid copper. For most hunting applications in the United States, and as required by many state laws, truly 100%, non-expanding, copper-solid bullets are off the table. That said, these true solids are extremely popular in countries like Africa, especially on big game like Cape buffalo or other species like the tiny 10-pound dik-dik, where either superior penetration or reduced damage are required. While it is a good idea to know the purpose of a solid copper bullet choice for customers who travel abroad, for the most part, hunting ammunition will focus on jacketed or controlled-expansion solid bullet choices.

Within the jacketed bullet category there are myriad options, and the most popular categories include: soft point, hollowpoint, ballistic tip, partition and bonded bullets. While there are many bullet types specific to a manufacturer, for instance, Remington Core-Lokt, these are generally flavor variations made specifically



↑ Hornady's Dangerous Game Series (left) and Winchester's Copper Impact (right) use very different projectiles — solids vs ballistic tips — for different performance on different types of game.

by a manufacturer to separate their version of a soft point from another manufacturer.

In addition to the expanding jacketed bullets choices, there are a handful of controlled-expansion solid choices that utilize a polymer tip or other mechanism to mushroom the bullet on impact for a larger wound track. The main difference between an expanding jacketed bullet and a controlled-expansion solid is the use of a lead core.

Jacketed bullets all have a softer lead core, which allows for expansion but also fragmentation as they expand. This allows the bullet to use all its energy within the target, but decreases through-target penetration upon impact of bone and hard tissues. Controlled-expansion solids, on the other hand, expand similarly to a jacketed bullet, but often boast nearly 100% weight retention for maximum penetration, even when they impact solid bone.

To quickly summarize the hunting bullet options, the following guide offers a quick breakdown.

Soft Point: The soft point has long been one of the most popular bullet

“The main difference between an expanding jacketed bullet and a controlled-expansion solid is the use of a lead core.”

choices for most game. Their structure consists of a thin, expanding metal jacket around a soft lead core. The nose of the bullet is exposed lead, and when a target is impacted, the lead begins deforming, thus opening the jacket, allowing it to expand. The one downfall to soft points is they are easily deformed, especially in a tube magazine or even in a hunter's pocket, which can impact repeatability and downrange accuracy.

Hollowpoint: Hollowpoints are similar to soft points. They also consist of a thin copper jacket, but instead of exposed lead, they have a small opening and hollow section at the tip. In most cases, hollowpoints do not readily expand, and are better suited for small game and varmints.

Ballistic Tip: Just like a hollowpoint, ballistic tip bullets have a thin copper jacket and a small hole in the end. Where they differ is a ballistic tip bullet has a pointed polymer insert that forms a sharp tip. Upon impact, the polymer tip will push back

← Hornady's Superformance line uses ballistic-tipped bullets, designed to provide dramatic expansion and maintain accuracy and velocity.



into the soft lead core and help force expansion like a soft point. While they function similarly to soft points, the polymer tip increases velocity and accuracy, especially at longer ranges, and is less easily damaged.

Partition: Developed by Nosler, partition bullets have gained a lot of popularity due to their excellent penetration. Like a soft point, they have a lead tip and core, but instead of just being a thin copper jacket over a single lead core, partitions have, well, a partition or wall between two different sections of lead. The front

section consists of a pointed lead slug and at the back there is a lead cylinder behind the partition. This allows the bullet to expand for increased damage but retain the shape of the rear of the bullet for deeper penetration.

Bonded: Bonded bullets are a newer design and less common due to their cost of manufacture. They are again similar to a soft point, but in this case, the lead and copper are permanently bonded together, forcing them to expand in unison. They are bonded together using a heating

Five Great Factory Options

Remington Core-Lokt Pointed Soft Point Ammunition

This is Remington's flavor of a soft point, and it's great for small to medium game. It's long been a proven performer in the hunting woods and has great expansion. The Core-Lokt family of bullets are also available in ballistic tip, hollowpoint, bonded, and a standard soft point for tubular magazine firearms.

Federal Premium Nosler Partition

While the partition bullet was invented by John Nosler, Federal Ammunition offers the bullet in its Premium line of ammunition. This ammo is great for medium to large game, offering good expansion and weight retention for great penetration. The Nosler partition bullet is also widely used by reloaders when making custom handloads.

Winchester Power Max Bonded Ammunition

Offering great expansion, long range accuracy, and knockdown power, this load is good for medium and large game, including tough animals like hogs or American bison. This ammo features a protected hollowpoint to promote repaired expansion.

Barnes TTSX Ammunition

TTSX stands for Tipped Triple shock. It uses a controlled-expansion, solid-copper bullet and has the same benefits as the company's standard TSX, but includes a polymer tip to boost BC and initiate expansion. It's great for medium to large game and has unwavering weight retention in bone or other dense matter.

Hornady Superformance Varmint V-Max

Deadly on varmints and predators, this ammo uses a ballistic tip to provide straight-line trajectory, enhanced accuracy, dramatic expansion and explosive fragmentation for deadly power without significant fur damage on the exit. It's available in most small-caliber chamberings.



process and offer excellent weight retention and penetration.

Controlled-Expansion Solids:

This bullet style combines a ballistic tip or hollowpoint with a solid copper bullet. These bullets have no thin jackets or lead core, and instead use the engineered tip to assist with expansion and increase the wound channel, but without bullet weight loss. This combination is great for penetration, especially on tougher game. Other benefits include reduced barrel fouling and in some cases increased velocity.

WHAT ABOUT BOAT TAILS?

Bullet choices can even further be broken down to either boat tail or flat base. In many cases, manufacturers have made that choice for the buyer, only offering one or their other, but in some cases, specifically when purchasing raw bullets for reloading, they may offer both. Boat tails were designed behind the premise that the chamfered back-end reduced drag, but the reality is that that only helps at certain velocities. For long-range shooting, this can be beneficial to maximize down-range velocity, but the effect on most calibers and hunting situations is minimal. There have long been arguments between seasoned reloaders about the differences, but in hunting situations, most of these points are moot.

↑ Barnes' TSX bullet is a popular solid copper option used in many factory loads.

WEIGHT, VELOCITY AND OTHER METRICS

If you are familiar with archery tackle, you know that speed is important, but so is mass. Kinetic Energy (KE) is a simple equation that uses the bullet's mass (m) and bullet's velocity (v). ($KE = 1/2 m v^2$). In simple terms, the greater the mass, at the same velocity, the greater the energy. While this is true, bullet cases can only hold "x" grains of powder, thus making them somewhat velocity limited. If a case is at its maximum capacity, increasing the bullet's mass will reduce its velocity. As a simple example, a .30-06 150-grain bullet is being pushed at 2,900 fps at the muzzle. That equates to a KE of 2801 ft./lbs. If changing to a 180-grain bullet reduces the velocity by 200 to 2,700 fps at the muzzle, the KE is 2,913 ft./lbs. While this does not appear to be a significant difference, the key phrase is, at the muzzle.

Where bullet weight begins impacting ballistics is at long distances. Bullets with a higher ballistic coefficient (BC) will retain more of their energy downrange, as they resist the wind better and maintain higher velocities. Typically, making a bullet longer increases the BC, and since



we have a fixed diameter, the only way to do that is by adding material, or mass. For example, a .30-caliber Hornady 150-grain Interlock Boattail Soft Point has a BC of .349. The same bullet choice, but in 180-grain, has a BC of .452. Now, using the same muzzle velocities as

↓ VLD (very low drag) bullets, like these from Berger, are ultra-streamlined for a high ballistic coefficient.



above, the 150-grain has a velocity of 1,725 fps at 500 yards and 991 ft./lbs. of KE. The 180-grain now, due to the increased BC, has a higher velocity than the 150-grain at 500 yards, 1,802 fps, and 1,298 ft./lbs. of KE. This is where bullet weight matters, and why many long-range hunters are choosing heavier bullets, sacrificing short-range velocity for long-range performance.

SELECTING THE RIGHT BULLET

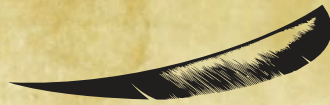
Now armed with the information, helping a customer select the right bullet for their needs comes down to a few questions. First, what game are they hunting? Second, what distance do they expect to shoot? And last and most often overlooked, what shot placement do they prefer?

While the first two are straightfor-



ward, it is important to explain the purpose of the third question before moving on. For example, some deer hunters prefer to shoot behind the shoulder, in the lung/heart region of

mostly soft tissue. On the other hand, other hunters prefer to take a neck or high-shoulder shot, in areas of dense bone. In these differing situations, the bullet type matters. A soft point,



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or variation like a ballistic tip, is perfect for the first hunter, as the thin jacketed bullet will allow for rapid expansion and fragmentation — a recipe for a quick, clean kill. For the second hunter, this bullet choice may not offer the required penetration, making something with better weight retention and less fragmentation, like a controlled-expansion solid, a better choice.

Getting back to the first and second questions, which are equally important, understanding the game and distance are important factors. In fact, some manufacturers even specify right on the box of ammunition what game it is suitable for.

For small game and varmints, like prairie dogs, coyotes, and other species, standard hollowpoints have long been a good choice, but other choices

including ballistic tip and standard soft point work just fine as well. For furbearers and other game where damage should be minimized, many hunters are choosing varmint-specific fragmenting bullets that almost

disintegrate on impact to reduce exit hole damage, like the Nosler Ballistic Tip Varmint.

For most mid-size game like whitetail, mule deer and antelope at distances less than 300 yards, any of

the bullet choices above will do just fine, if the hunter chooses the correct shot placement for the bullet type. Soft points have historically been a choice used by whitetail hunters because, quite simply, they work. For hunters intending to shoot longer distances, ballistic tip bullets offer increased velocity and, as explained above, heavier bullet choices will shoot flatter past 400 yards.

For larger game, like elk or American bison, or tough game like wild hogs, partitions, bonded bullets, or controlled-expansion solids are great choices as they offer greater weight retention, which will increase penetration. Additionally, for larger game even at short ranges, heavier bullet choices will provide higher KE, a key factor for these larger, tougher animals. **HR**



↑ Projectiles come in so many variants these days. Are you recommending the right options to your shoppers?

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Gauntlet SL30



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Tapping Into the Lion's Share

It's no secret that the recreational, tactical and self-defense side of the firearms industry is growing faster than the hunting side. How do you tap into this market without losing your identity?

BY TRENT MARSH

While hunting numbers have ebbed and flowed over the last few decades, the shooting and self-defense markets have grown at tremendous rates. Is your store capitalizing on that growing market, or are you pigeonholed as a hunting-only store? Getting in on the expanding side of the industry may be what keeps your store viable for years to come, but how can you bridge that gap and reposition your store?





DON'T OVERDO IT

The easy answer to that last question is don't go too far. The goal here is NOT to turn your hunting-first store into Ted's Tactical Emporium. You're trying to expand the customer base to be welcoming of all shooters and hunters, and at the very least make your shop a destination they don't dismiss entirely.

Isolating your current customers in an attempt to bring in some new clients doesn't net you much and requires a significant investment that gets difficult to realize if your base customers start migrating somewhere else.

Stay true to the roots of your store, but take a serious look at the balance

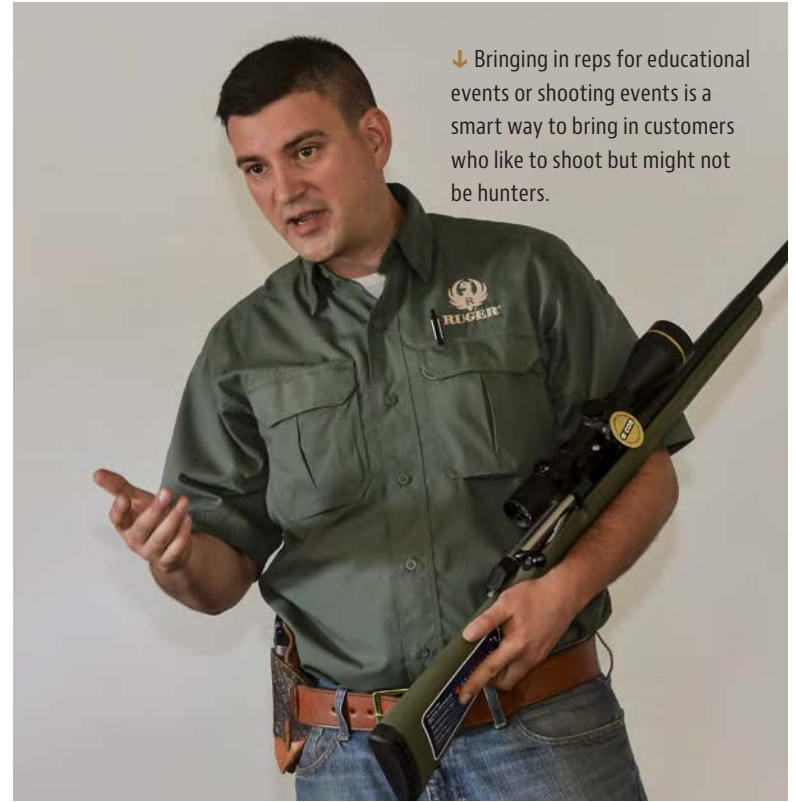
.....
 ↓ Hosting events or sponsoring classes at a local range can help expand your market.

of the market in the area and see how you might be able to attract some of those fringe customers that aren't coming through your doors now.

FIRST, KNOW THYSELF

Before you start to expand into the shooting side of the market, it's a good idea to complete a brand and market analysis for where you are today. Internally, have a conversation with the staff to build a sort of SWOT analysis. Get a concrete feel for the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that have already been identified within the organization. That exercise alone will help to set priorities based on what you're already hearing or what the staff is already motivated to change, add or evolve.

Next, take the questions to your customers. Hopefully, you have a customer database that you can access



↓ Bringing in reps for educational events or shooting events is a smart way to bring in customers who like to shoot but might not be hunters.



to gather some feedback, especially if you don't have a mechanism for ongoing feedback. An email database would allow you to create a survey, but even on social, you can ask some open-ended questions to get similar feedback.

Social is a little more dangerous because it's impossible to make it even remotely scientific, but it can still provide valuable insights about what your existing customer base may be looking for and how they view your brand, and it can expose weaknesses that you weren't aware were there.

While this exercise is meant to help expose some of those areas where you can expand, it should also confirm and reinforce your strengths. As you look to expand your base, take care to not let it weaken your biggest strengths.

WHY THE SHOOTING MARKET?

We know this part of the market is expanding, but that growth isn't the only reason to pursue it. The customers themselves offer a lot of value as well.

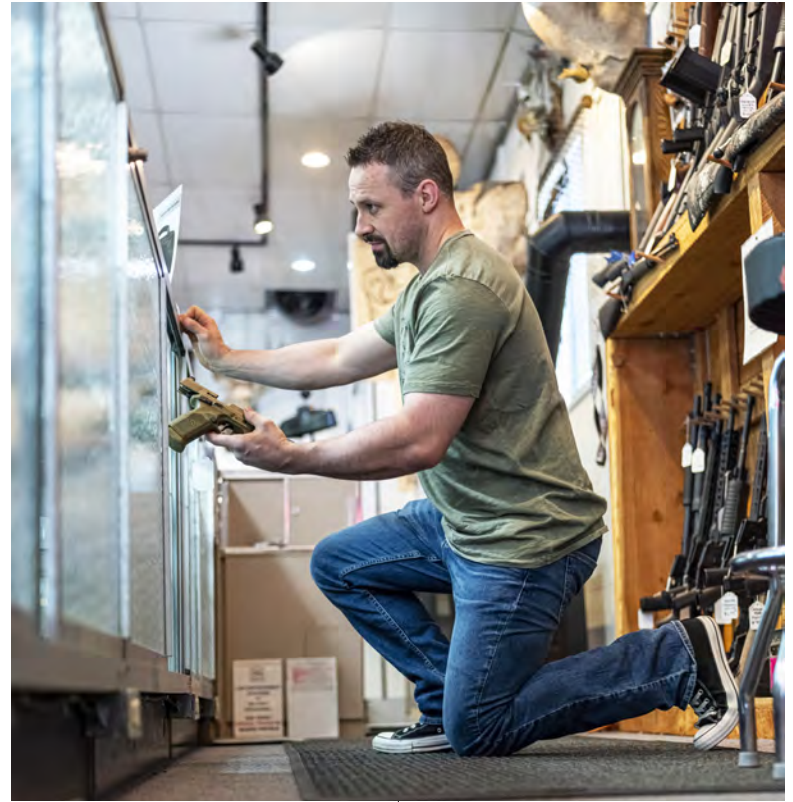
If you think about a significant number of your hunting customers, you will find that many of them are second- or even third-generation shoppers in your store. Hunting is traditionally passed down from generation to generation. That creates a nice customer base to work from, but it also comes with challenges. When you have a mentor, you hopefully acquire some of their knowledge and skills to help shortcut your own learning curve. That also comes with

their biases. The hunting market has a fair share of "Daddy drove a Chevy and shot a Winchester topped with a Leupold, and by gum, so will I!"

The shooting market, especially newer shooters, have almost none of that brand loyalty baggage. They are looking for good information and options when purchasing. A reliable counter staff that these customers grow to trust becomes a valuable resource for ongoing support and future purchases.

I can't count the number of times I've been on either side of the counter in a hunting shop and seen a customer go to the mattresses repeating some old trope that was either never true, or was disproven years ago, but he continues to repeat it because his mentor said it.

Does that mindset exist on the shooting side too? Sure, there's bound to be some of it. But largely, in my



→ Take a look at your stock. If you're not carrying handguns, it's no wonder handgun shooters aren't darkening your doors.



experience, and in the experience of the shops I have spoken with, far less than on the hunting side. You may have to disprove something that someone saw on Tik-Tok, but that's true of baking, gardening, construction, and horseback riding as much as it is hunting and shooting.

INVENTORY CONSIDERATIONS

The biggest benefit is that you probably have the vast majority of the inventory you need already on hand. You aren't investing in a whole new store — you're just looking to make your marketing reach a new client.

If you're selling firearms, are you stocking a full complement of offerings, or just traditional hunting rifles? Do you stock handguns? What about modern sporting rifles? Hopefully you answered yes to all of these. That makes the shooting market pivot that much easier.

If for some reason you aren't stocking all these items, talk to your distributors about getting some more gear on hand. You can't sell what you don't have in the store.

This goes for accessories as well. Again, you likely already have what you need. You know the margins are better on optics, slings, and magazines than on the guns themselves. Take advantage and make sure your offering is complete, even if you're doing a limited offering of the base firearms. The last thing you want to do is have to send these customers somewhere else.

BRANCHING OUT

So, you've thought about the market, looked at your inventory, and decided making a bigger play for the at-large shooting market makes sense for your shop. Now what?

Here are four strategies you to start growing your market share.

Plan & Promote a Special Event



↑ Long-range target shooting is all the rage, and it's not a big leap from your hunting market. Are you taking advantage?

.....
 – The benefit of having a hunting focus is that you can look at the coming year and predict your peaks and valleys based on when hunting seasons land in your area. That cuts the other way as well, as those valleys can sometimes be challenging. What better way to flatten your store's revenue curve than to plan an event without a hunting focus in one of your traditional lulls?

Maybe it's as simple as a sale that focuses on shooting rather than hunting items. Maybe your facility can host a shooting event, range

day, or competition. Some of what you choose may be dictated by the specifics of what the local market is looking for you to move into.

Regardless, use an event to help reshape the common perception of your shop, but be sure to pair it with promotion to hit some of those potential new clients.

Partner with an Instructor – Do you have local instructor with some following in your area? Consider hosting them to teach a class, or a series of classes at your location. Let someone else's customer base become your own by affiliation, instead of trying to create your own from the ground up.

Depending on how you structure this relationship, and what your facility is able to accommodate, you may

even be able to negotiate this being a revenue source even without new sales or clients. It is not uncommon for facilities to take a percentage of the revenue for paid classes for providing the location. Not to mention, some of your existing customers may be new clients for the instructor.

Done right, a partnership with someone who already has a following in the shooting or tactical space can be a classic win-win scenario.

Hold Classes – You probably already have the expertise in your shop to be able to hold some classes of your own. You can start with classes geared towards new or newer gun owners without enlisting the help of an outside instructor. These classes could focus on basic firearm functions and options, accessories,





fit and selection of a firearm, basic firearm terminology, the options are almost endless.

With so many new shooters coming to gun ownership without a mentor to teach them some of even the most basic skills or facts, you can rapidly assert your shop and staff as a trusted and reliable resource for these clients.

Adjust Advertising – Perception is reality, and advertising is designed to manipulate perception. If the local perception of your shop is that it caters only to hunters, non-hunting shooters will assume that your shop isn't the right fit for them.

Ideally this is part of a larger strategy to promote a special event, class or series of classes to appeal to that market, but if you're already running

advertising geared towards hunters, mix it up and add some shooter-centric messaging into the equation, especially during those lulls in the annual hunting calendar.

You don't have to drastically change anything about your shop to appeal to shooters. A quick evaluation of your store's place in the local market, what holes you can fill, and any inventory weak spots will quickly put you on the track to expand the appeal of your store to some customers in your area you may have been missing.

More likely than not, it's nothing more than an exercise in adjusting the perception of your store that will allow you to grab even more market share and flatten your sales curve over the course of time. **HR**



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Optics Evaluation

No one deserves to buy a cheap scope, but there's an option for every budget. How do you help customers see the light about what's right for them?

BY ACE LUCIANO

In the world of hunting, shooting and even simply exploring the vast and amazing country we live in, the selection of the various optical instruments your customer uses plays a pivotal role in enhancing their chosen activities. Good binoculars make it easier to spot game and pick out detail at long distance. Clear and distortion-free riflescopes can extend a hunter's shooting light at sunrise and sunset. Rangefinders help to judge distance precisely for more accurate shots. From the versatility of binoculars to precision-oriented riflescopes, and the new-to-the-civilian-market advanced thermal imaging devices, each category has its own "-isms" that, when explained, help your customer get the exact product they need and you the sale.





THE RULE OF THUMB FOR OPTICS

In optics, you truly get what you pay for.

I'm sure you've heard this before: "It's better to have a \$1,000 scope on a \$200 rifle than a \$200 scope on a \$1,000 rifle. Why is this true? Most guns sold today shoot MOA out of the box. The scope you pick to mount on it can make it more or less capable in your hands.

As you increase in price of optics, you actually get more for your money. So, how can you know which optics are best for a specific customer? By asking some simple questions such as, "What will this be mostly used for?" and the ever-important, "What is your budget for this optic?"

In most cases, it will actually be in the customer's best interest for you to sell them something more expensive than their budget. I know that sounds self-serving, but hear me out. For example, someone buys a new hunting rifle and wants to also start shooting some local PRC competitions, but say they have a budget of "around \$300..." You can certainly find something that will get the job done, but likely not as well as they could or would want to.

So, what's the difference? Following is what you can expect for various price ranges for different optics.

LENS COATINGS

Most folks don't know that there are only a few sources of optic-quality glass in the world. That means every manufacturer gets their glass from those same few places, and that same glass is in every level of optic. Gone, too, are the days where the skill of the engineer — usually European — and the quality of his tools made a dramatic difference, as everything today is done by computer, and that computer doesn't care if it is



← Outdoor light is ideal for evaluating optics, of course, if you have a good place outdoors for this purpose.

commanded in German, Japanese, Chinese or English.

The optical performance of all optics is significantly influenced by the type and quality of lens coatings applied. Coatings serve to improve light transmission, reduce glare, and enhance image clarity. Within the realm of lens coatings, the progression from single-coated lenses in low-priced binoculars to fully coated lenses in middle-priced options, and ultimately multi-coated lenses in the high-priced variants, represents a trajectory of increasing optical refinement. Multi-coated lenses, in particular, contribute to reduced glare, superior color fidelity, and enhanced image resolution.

BINOCULARS AND SPOTTING SCOPES

Binoculars and spotting scopes utilize prisms to correct image orientation and redirect the light path to your pupil. Two primary prism types exist: Porro prisms and roof prisms. Low and middle-priced binoculars often incorporate Porro prisms (though they are becoming more and more rare), providing a wider field of view and greater depth perception. Higher-priced binoculars predominantly feature roof prisms, known for their streamlined and compact design, facilitating portability without compromising optical excellence.

The durability and overall performance of binoculars will be influenced by their construction and build quality. Higher-priced binoculars often employ premium materials, such as magnesium alloy or high-grade polycarbonate, resulting





“Low-priced binoculars are, or should be, an entry-level option that cater to individuals beginning their foray into outdoor adventures.”

↑ Don't forget about warranties. Know the policies of the brands you carry and make sure to inform buyers before they make a decision.

in a robust yet lightweight design. Additionally, higher-priced binoculars frequently incorporate features like waterproofing and fog-proofing, ensuring performance in all weather conditions. Here is what you can expect at each price point:

LOW-PRICED BINOCULARS: (<\$200)

Low-priced binoculars are, or should be, an entry-level option that cater to individuals beginning their foray into outdoor activities. Typically characterized by basic features and construction, these binoculars are suitable for general use, such as casual bird watching, hiking, or attending sporting events. While budget-friendly,

ly, their optical performance may exhibit large limitations, particularly in challenging and changing lighting conditions.

MID-PRICED BINOCULARS: (\$300-\$900)

Stepping up to mid-priced binoculars introduces a balance between affordability and performance. Crafted with improved build quality, better materials, and advanced optical technologies, these binoculars cater to a broader range of outdoor activities. With enhanced image clarity, HD/ED glass, sharper resolution, and improved low-light performance, mid-priced binoculars serve as reliable companions for enthusiasts seeking better vision, low-light performance and durability. This mid range has grown tremendously over the past decade, with the difference between this price point and the one above it getting smaller every year.



↑ If you have a range, having some rental guns set up with your top-selling scopes can help customers get hands-on with options they're considering.

TOP QUALITY BINOCULARS: (\$1,000-\$6,000)

At the pinnacle of the optics hierarchy, the highest quality binoculars are designed for discerning outdoor aficionados who prioritize uncom-

promised performance. Constructed with ultimate precision using premium materials and cutting-edge technologies, these binoculars deliver unparalleled optical clarity, vivid color reproduction, and outstanding performance in all conditions. Higher-end models add rangefinding ability and image stabilization. Ideal for professional wildlife observation, long-distance birding, or big-game hunting, high-priced binoculars set the standard for excellence. At this



end of the spectrum, you're really splitting hairs between the top quality brands, and features and coatings are the differentiators. At the upper reaches, some will be able to truly see in the dark.

Spotting scopes are like one side of a binocular with much larger magnification and follow a very similar price range, though the mid-level seems to have a smaller span in price.

Lens clarity and optical coatings make a huge difference in light transmission through a spotting scope, thus, the difference between the performance of a low priced vs. a high priced spotting scope is easily noticeable.

LOW-PRICED RIFLESCOPES: (<\$200)

Low-priced riflescopes provide the basic functionalities required for accurate shooting. These scopes exhibit limitations in terms of optical clarity, magnification range and precision and clarity, particularly at higher magnifications.

MID-PRICED RIFLESCOPES: (\$300-\$900)

Mid-priced riflescopes cater to a more discerning audience. As with binoculars, they are characterized by improved optics, better light transmission, and enhanced durability. These scopes elevate the shooting experience. Magnification ranges are larger — think 4-16x, 5-25x, and even a little more. Suitable for serious hunters or marksmen engaged in competitive shooting, mid-priced riflescopes are reliable and accurate and that serve a much broader part of the market than most think.

HIGH-END RIFLESCOPES: (\$1,200-\$8,000)

Positioned at the zenith of the market, high-end riflescopes are crafted with meticulous attention to



detail and, utilizing state-of-the-art technologies, these scopes deliver unparalleled optical performance. Features such as illuminated reticles, advanced windage adjustments, side parallax focus, larger tube diameter, the greatest levels and ranges of magnification and superior clarity make high-priced riflescopes the choice of professionals and enthusiasts who demand the utmost precision. Some of the newer scopes at this level have built-in rangefinders and ballistic calculators that pair with their range-finding counterparts. Most thermal rifle scopes fall into this category.

So, now we've defined the products. How do we sell them?

Initiate the educational process by fully understanding the consumer's intended use.

You're going to hunt? Where?

↑ Even without a range, scopes mounted on rifles make good displays and can help you sell more.

What types of game? How long is your average shot? Will you be glassing for detail at 200 yards or 2 miles?

Their answer to these questions will likely let you know which level to present of the low, middle, and high-priced options — though the argument could definitely be made that nobody deserves to buy a cheap scope! Illustrate the trade-offs associated with each tier explained in order to manage their expectations.

Remember: Going up in price RANGE is never a bad option, though sometimes simply going up in price at the same range level isn't the greatest thing for the customer.

EXPLAINING "EXIT PUPIL"

In any optic, the exit pupil is the width of the beam of light leaving the eyepiece, usually measured in millimeters (mm). The larger the exit pupil, the brighter the image will be seen by your eye under low-light conditions. Exit pupil size is calculated by dividing the objective lens size by the magnification power. For example, a 10x50 set of binoculars has an exit pupil of 5mm.

In the dark, the human pupil can open to a diameter of about 8mm — but we don't typically use optics (except thermals, but that's another discussion and article) without light, so the average pupil opening is 4 to 4.5mm under most conditions, which means any exit pupil greater than that is superfluous. Less than that and the image through the optic will become darker.

Also, with greater magnification comes the need for a larger objective lens in order to offset the magnification side of the equation and transmit the most light that the eye can see. All else being equal, greater magnification = larger diameter objective lens = greater cost, with few exceptions.

ENCOURAGING HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Want to sell a lot more high-end optics? Conclude the educational process by encouraging consumers to engage in a hands-on exploration of the optics. Advocate for in-store testing whenever possible, allowing customers to experience the weight, ergonomics and functionality of the selected optic, but do not let them judge the performance of optics inside a store — or even in the parking lot during the day.

If you really want to show them the difference between good-better-best, host an "Optics Eval Night."





Start with a brief talk about optics and the differences between different price points, and then have a bunch of different optics for them to try. If you've read past issues of this magazine, you know that your first call should have been to your manufacturer's rep/rep groups that sell your optics for some products and help.

As the sun goes down, encourage customers to look into the shadows at different objects that you've placed at different ranges. It won't take long before you see the head nods, the aha's, and the smiles. Then, as they're getting out their wallet to make that purchase as darkness comes, make sure to ask, "Now that it's dark, how would you like to look though some of our new thermal scopes?"

...and get ready to order some more inventory. **HR**



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Survey Reveals Strong Support From Non-Hunters for Firearm Industry Conservation Funding

BY JOE BARTOZZI

Hunters have prided themselves as being the “original conservationists.” They’re rightfully boastful of that moniker. After all, the hunting licenses, stamps and permit fees hunters pay go directly into wildlife conservation in their states and across the nation.

It’s not just hunters paying into those conservation investments. Recreational target shooters and non-hunting gun owners are an increasingly significant part of that equation. Every firearm and ammunition manufacturer pays an 11% tax on long guns and ammunition and a 10% tax on handguns that goes directly to the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Trust Program.

That fund, commonly called the Pittman-Robertson excise tax, was responsible for generating over \$1.6 billion in funds apportioned back to the states for wildlife conservation and increased access to public lands and recreational shooting opportunities in 2023 alone. About 90% of the money funding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) can be sourced to the Pittman-Robertson excise taxes paid by firearm and ammunition manufacturers.

What’s more is everyday gun owners and recreational target shooters, who may never go afield to chase wild game, are overwhelmingly supportive of firearm and ammunition manufacturers, the same ones they support, paying that excise tax so everyone can enjoy abundant wildlife and access to public lands.



SURVEY SAYS...

A survey conducted by Responsive Management, in partnership with the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA), found that 86% of gun owners and recreational target marksmen and women who don’t hunt support the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration

Program. That’s an incredible level of support for non-hunters to support a tax that’s been investing over \$25 billion in wildlife conservation since 1937, when adjusted for inflation.

Those findings also show incredible support for the firearm and ammunition industry to continue to support these conservation investments

through the excise taxes on firearms and ammunition even as the customers buying these products continues to shift over generations.

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program was established in 1937, a time when most gun and ammunition buyers were hunters. This was the model of the “user-pay, user-benefit” system whereby hunters who harvested wild game would be supporting the manufacturers of the products they use — in this case firearms and ammunition. Those manufacturers pay an excise tax to reinvest a portion of their proceeds to sustaining healthy wildlife and the habitats in which those animals thrive.

Over time, recreational target shooting grew in popularity as a sport, even as hunting numbers have waned in comparison with population growth across America. That means today’s wildlife conservation efforts are increasingly funded by recreational target shooters and everyday gun owners. Those particular firearm owners might never go into the fields, woods and marshes, but they’re overwhelmingly supportive knowing that the tax the manufacturers pay on the firearms and ammunition they’re purchasing is ensuring that everyone in America — hunters and non-hunters alike — are able to benefit from the wildlife conservation investments made by the excise taxes paid by manufacturers.

That support is more than a passing thought to non-hunting gun owners and recreational target shooters. Of that 86% that indicated





encouraging news and should give legislators a clear sense of how vital the Wildlife Restoration program is. It should also put to rest any ideas of using it for any other purpose.”

The notion of a “conservationist” needs an update. It started with hunters dedicated to ensuring that abundant wildlife and public land access was

available to future generations of hunters. Today, that’s not confined to men and women with blaze orange caps and camouflage waders. Today’s conservationists proudly include those at indoor ranges, sporting clays courses and next-door neighbors who own a firearm for self-defense.

It’s a moniker we’re proud to share. **HR**

they supported the excise tax, 52% — over half — responded with strong support to the survey. Just 3% were opposed to the tax and another 12% were neutral.

Later questions in the survey revealed that 9 out of 10 non-hunters were proud to support conservation investments and 8 out of 10 non-hunters feel connected to wildlife and conservation.

CONSERVATIONISTS REDEFINED

This might not be all that surprising to those of us “inside the industry.” We’re routinely exposed to gun owners from all walks of life daily. This is an industry that takes pride in our responsibility to conservation. Our customers share that passion — even if they never choose to harvest wild game.

Still, those findings — especially the overwhelmingly high percentage of non-hunters who support the excise taxes manufacturers pay for wildlife conservation investments — were surprising for the architects of the survey.

“I expected that there would be support for the Federal Aid program, but not to this extent,” said Responsive Management Executive Director Mark Damian Duda. “I thought there would be more opposition from gun owners and shooters who feel that any tax revenue they generate should go back strictly to shooting projects. Instead, what we saw is that most gun owners and shooters care about wildlife conservation, even if they don’t hunt. Support for Pittman-Robertson exists across the board, with sizable majorities of every demographic group within the sample favoring the program. This is

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Scan to learn more:



A person wearing an orange beanie is looking through a rifle scope. The background is a blurred outdoor setting, likely a hunting area. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

A Western-Worthy Scope That's Actually Affordable?

If your customers hear "EOTECH" and think "military" or "tactical," the new Vudu X line will change their minds.

BY HILARY DYER

I've been around long enough to know that when fate hands you an easy hunt, you take it gratefully and savor it, because that kind of luck is rare. But still, I can't help feeling a little bit like I cheated at elk hunting.

Half an hour before legal shooting light on day one of my first elk hunt ever, I was excited and nervous sitting in the cab of the truck on a hillside in Montana. I've been in the hunting industry 20 years waiting for an opportunity to hunt elk! When we felt we had enough light to navigate safely through grizzly country, my guide Jeff and I, along with a buddy, Dave, climbed out of the truck and gained just a little elevation before we began hiking along the mountain, with the peak to our left and a meadow to our right. Jeff kept laying out his hopes for the morning with "If we're lucky" statements: "If we're lucky, the elk will be down in the meadow and that bull will still be in the herd." "If we're lucky, they'll wait until after legal shooting light to head up." "If we're lucky, they'll go this way and not that way."






EOTECH



BOG



We set up in front of a small brushy tree and I settled my Seekins Precision Havak PH2 on the shooting sticks, got comfortable, and chambered a round. “If we’re lucky,” Jeff said, “they’ll come up in front of us, not behind us. And if we’re lucky, they’ll walk up somewhere around that bush out there, which is about 175 yards.”

We were lucky, and they did. As if following Jeff’s script, not 10 minutes after legal shooting light, the herd headed up the mountain in front of us, ambling single-file just past that bush. “Four more cows will pass the big bush and then it’ll be the bull,” Jeff whispered.

After the trigger squeeze, I looked up while jacking another round into the chamber, and the bull was gone. I had a split second of panic until

Dave whisper-hollered “He’s down!” On the first morning of my first elk hunt, only 15 minutes into legal shooting light, it was all over before I had really even experienced what elk hunting was supposed to be.

As I said, I’ve learned to take the easy ones when I can get them, and later that week, I used the same rig to shot a nice mule deer that didn’t make the task nearly so easy. Another hunter in our party killed his bull that first morning, too, but Dave and the fourth hunter in camp spent the next three days huffing and puffing up and down mountains, sucking wind, taping blisters and chasing bulls. You know — elk hunting.

I’ll almost certainly never experience such lucky elk “hunting” again, and the circumstances are what made it seem so easy. However, I’ve learned

the hard way over the years that even the simplest hunting excursions can be sabotaged by faulty equipment, and the trust I had in the gear I was using made a 200-yard shot in dim light a slam-dunk.

The hunt was sponsored by EOTECH to promote their brand-new Vudu X scope, which officially debuted to the world on January 1, 2024 and should be shipping to dealers by the time you read this. I chose a 2-12x40 with an illuminated BD1 reticle, sitting on that Seekins Havak PH2 chambered in 7mm PRC, shooting Hornady Precision Hunter ammo (175 grains). The Vudu X is EOTECH’s answer to a common problem they’d noticed with their popular Vudu line.

“We launched our standard Vudu line in 2016 and really grew it into

a great product line,” EOTECH’s John Bailey told me in camp. “It has a pretty broad magnification range and first-focal-plane and second-focal-plane options. That line is doing extremely well tactically but not hunting-wise or recreationally. We discovered it’s just overpriced for that market. It’s really kind of high-quality, high-performance, Japanese glass, all that. Your tactical shooters will buy that, but your hunters just aren’t buying it.

“Then we looked at our competitors and what they are selling,” he continued. “We talked to dealers about what price point is the bigger seller. So we decided to make Vudu

↓ The author and her guide on an early-morning elk hunt in Montana.



“ [The Vudu X] still carries a lot of features and benefits of the Vudu line, but at a more reasonable price.”
— EOTECH’s John Bailey

X, and our initial push is second-focal-plane scopes with magnification options that really work for hunting, 3-gun and recreational use. It still carries a lot of features and benefits of the Vudu, but at a more reasonable price.”

While I shot the 2-12x40, the Vudu X also debuted in a 1-6x24 “because LVPOs are just ridiculously hot,” John said. “You have to make one. We investigated, and still the most popular magnification sold is a 3-9x40 — but most of them sell under \$199 MSRP or thereabouts. It tells us that that magnification range is what people are looking for. So we did what we think is a little bit better — we gave you a little less magnification on the low end, more on the other, so you still have your 3-9 but you have more capability either way. We think it’s a good all-purpose optic. You can hunt it in the East in brush and heavy forests on low power, or you can do what we did this week out West, where you’re going 300 to 400, 500 yards, and you have the magnification to do it.”

Indeed, while my elk was shot at around 200 yards, I killed a mule deer buck later in the week at a bit over 300, and had more than enough magnification to watch that buck work his way in from much farther out. But more importantly, the Vudu X didn’t let me down in low light. When that bull elk emerged from be-

→ The EOTECH Vudu X 2-12x40 served the author well in Montana.



→ Hornady’s Precision Hunter ammo (175 grains) did the job nicely on two big-game animals in Montana.

hind the bush just a few minutes into legal shooting light, there was absolutely no question what I was looking at and no problem seeing clearly to make a clean shot. Those first few minutes and last few minutes of legal light are where a scope either fails or rises to the occasion, and the Vudu X didn’t let me down.

Jeff, who has been guiding for elk for many years, agreed, and shared his thoughts on hunting scopes for

← For this hunt, the firearm of choice was a Seekins Precision Havak PH2 chambered in 7mm PRC.



the wide-open spaces of Montana: “If you’re going to be looking at stuff in low light, as we do all the time in hunting, I like a good quality scope so you can still see. I like a variable scope so you can have it at a low power then be able to crank the power up once you’re on a target and still retain clarity. We never push the time as far as shooting light, but with a variable scope, low power gives you a little more light in the first and last five minutes of legal shooting light. That said, there’s no reason to have more than 12 power in my opinion.”

With high-quality AR-coated glass, the Vudu X scopes are crystal clear, even on the highest magnification setting. They’re built on a 30mm tube and have capped turrets (MOA based) with a simple zero reset feature, and the magnification throw lever is removable if it doesn’t suit your purposes. You can get it in a simple crosshair reticle or the BD1 reticle with circular ballistic holds at 2MOA intervals — this reticle is my personal preference. Both reticles are illuminated and run off a CR2032 battery. Front and back flip-up scope caps are included, which is a nice touch that every optics company

ought to be offering standard, in my opinion.

EOTECH’s regular Vudu line starts off at an MSRP of about \$1,400, but the Vudu X I used retails for \$859 — a considerable savings without a big trade-off in features or glass quality. The 1-6X retails for \$799.

Bailey admits that hunters have a perception problem when it comes to EOTECH optics. “There’s a benefit but you also get hurt a little bit when all you’re known for is the military stuff,” he said. “On the other hand, you have the reputation that you build gear for the military. And we always try to communicate that that stuff carries over — we test our Vudu scopes, our pistol sights, all that stuff, on the same equipment, with the same parameters, that we test the holographic sight that’s built primarily for the military. If you ever go to our factory, you’d be amazed at how much testing equipment we have to really make sure that what you’re buying matches the performance and quality you expect.”

Banking on that military-grade reputation is one way to steer a potential customer toward EOTECH scopes. But what else can

mom-and-pop retailers tell shoppers when they walk in to buy that 3-9x40 from the same brand their grandpa always bought from? “In our engineering and design, in our work with partners, we try to knock down every barrier,” Bailey told me. “We know people are going to walk in and they’re going to want to buy a Vortex or they’re going to want to buy a Bushnell. They don’t know why they want to buy that; it’s just the brand that they know. We have to break all those barriers down.

“So price is one thing — you have to be competitive on price and obviously on performance. EOTECH has always been a have-to-see-it-to-believe-it kind of thing. You know, when you see a holographic sight, it kind of opens your eyes. To that end, we make sure the glass is really clear, so if somebody’s doing a side-by-side comparison, they don’t know if the turrets are really going to dial perfectly, but when they look through it, the clarity’s really solid and the illumination’s really good.”

↓ The author’s elk was taken just a few minutes into legal shooting light.

The Author’s Western Hunting Gear

For this hunt, I carried a Seekins Precision Havak PH2 chambered in 7mm-PRC. With a stainless steel barrel and a Seekins carbon composite stock, it was built for the elements, and at 7.2 pounds unloaded, it wasn’t a burden to haul around. At the same time, the 7mmPRC chambering is long-range capable, with excellent ballistics and plenty of knock-down power.

I used Hornady’s Precision Hunter ammunition, built for accuracy and terminal performance, with a 175-grain ELD-X projectile. Accuracy at the range was impressive, and although my sample size is limited to two animals, both dropped where they stood, so I’m more than pleased with the effectiveness. Using the company’s proprietary Heat Shield tip, Hornady has made this to be two bullets in one — at less than 400-yard velocities, it’s designed for 50 to 60% weight retention, while at 400-yard-plus impacts at lower velocities, the tip drives backward into the bullet to initiate expansion, and hunters can expect 85 to 90% weight retention and an impressive mushroom.

It was unseasonably warm in November in Montana, so I layered up using gear from DSG, including the Ava 2.0 jacket and pant. DSG makes hunting clothing specifically for women in a huge range of sizes, and is worth a look if you’re not currently carrying a women’s line. I paired my DSG gear with a pair of Rocky’s Sport Pro 7-inch boots, with an aggressive outsole and 800 grams of Thinsulate insulation, neither of which I ended up needing on this particular hunt — but the boots were more than comfortable and required a surprisingly short break-in time.



And breaking down barriers doesn't just apply to consumers — EOTECH knows it needs to make a dealer's job easy to help you sell more scopes. "From a dealer standpoint, we want to make sure that they get solid or better margins than our competitors, so that breaks down that barrier — because they want to make money," Bailey said. "We have a quality product, competitively priced, so the dealer makes money, and we support our dealers through programs and things like that. So why *wouldn't* they want to bring EOTECH up when somebody walks through the door?"

The bottom line? Hunters don't need the highest-tier scope money can buy in order to make reliable shots on game at moderate distances in low light. High-end optics are great and absolutely have their place,



↑ Magnification of 2-12X on the Vudu X was more than plenty for this mule deer, taken at a bit over 300 yards.

but top-tier glass isn't a requirement to successfully hunt out West or anywhere else. You don't even need to drop a grand on a mid-range scope from one of the classic big-name brands for a big-game hunt of a life-

time. Do clarity and light transmission matter at those critical moments at dawn and dusk? Absolutely they do, but they can be had affordably from a brand you might have previously associated with tactical optics.

"Vudu X has a lot of the same characteristics as Vudu, and we didn't make the Vudu line to displace any of the big brands in the industry," Bailey said. "But we know optics extremely well, and we're one of the only American-brand optics in America. We focus so much on quality and precision and functionality, that whether it's Vudu X or any of the other optics products we make, you're going to get a good product. We back it up with a ridiculous warranty. Vudu X is a brand extension, but it carries the quality and perception of what our brand does."

The EOTECH Vudu X line, which will be expanded beyond the two initial offerings, brings EOTECH's military-tough testing and production quality to the hunting world at a price that will leave your customers room for their taxidermy bill. **HR**

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HUNTING RETAILER GEAR ROUNDUP

Traditional Riflescopes

Help your patrons get the best possible performance from their rifles with the latest and greatest in hunting optics.

BY GORDY KRAHN

It makes little sense to invest a bunch of money in a rifle capable of punching minute-of-angle groups and then equip it with substandard glass that inhibits that capability. And that's why the familiar adage "buy the best optics you can afford" holds a lot of credence — and is relevant on both sides of the retail fence. Buyers benefit by topping their favorite rifles with quality optics (the best they can afford) that make it the best it can be, while hunting retailers improve their bottom line

by cross-selling those optics to their rifle-buying patrons.

Only when a rifle's optics are of optimum quality and the hunter's trigger squeeze is true will it be possible to wring every bit of accuracy from a tack-driving hunting rifle, but there are several factors to consider when purchasing a new scope: the type of firearm, the game pursued and the type of terrain in which the hunting will occur, for starters. When hunting Big Sky country, for example, it's important to employ

a riflescope with the power and clarity to reach out to the neighboring ZIP code and guide your bullet to the promised land. Hunters in brushy, cluttered environs, on the other hand, might benefit more from low-power, quick-handling optics.

But it often comes back to affordable quality. And, of course, this means different things to different folks. Patrons of your store, or those who visit your website, should carefully consider those optics characteristics and qualities that make sense

for the type of rifle they own and the type of hunting they do before laying down their hard-earn Benjamins, and as an informed retailer, you can help in that decision-making process. So be sure to have all your bases covered by stocking a wide array of riflescopes in an even wider range of price points to ensure every patron exits with the proper optics to fill their needs — and within their budget. Here are a dozen top-shelf options you might send them home with.



Black Diamond Optics UL-12T

The UL-12T Riflescope from Black Diamond Optics (\$349) features an ultralight one-piece design made from aircraft-quality aluminum — its rugged construction providing years of dependability under magnum recoil. The scope's high-definition glass with fully multicoated lenses, 4-12 power magnification, 40mm objective lens and 100% waterproofing assure clarity and reliability in any hunting conditions. Exposed locking turrets allow easily accessed elevation adjustment, allowing for precision shots at greater distances. The UL-12T has a 1-inch tube diameter, is 12.875 inches long and weighs 15 ounces. It has 3.3 inches of eye relief, is dust proof, shockproof and fog proof and has a matte black anodized finish. www.blackdiamondoptics.com



EOTech Vudu X Series 1-6x24mm SFP

The Vudu X Series 1-6x24mm Second Focal Plane Riflescope (\$799) from EOTech features aircraft-grade aluminum construction, a daylight bright illuminated reticle and precision turrets that provide deadly accuracy. The magnification power ring includes easy-to-see laser engraved numbering and a removable throw lever for quick transitions through the magnification range. Capped turrets provide a clean look while protecting them from inadvertent adjustments. The Vudu X Series 1-6x24mm riflescope features a 30mm tube, 24mm objective lens, has an overall length of 10.3 inches and weighs 17.8 ounces. Clear, crisp glass and generous eye relief makes this a go-to optic for close- to medium-range hunting. www.eotechinc.com





GPO USA Centuri

The Centuri Rifle scope from GPO USA is available in six models (\$539-\$639), including two super-compact options (3-12x44i SC and 4-16x44i SC) and four traditional-size models (4-16x44i, 2.5-15x44i, 2.5-15x50i and 3-18x44i). They feature a 30mm tube, GPObright high transmission lens coating technology, iControl auto-off illuminated reticles and DoubleHD objective lens technology. The Super Compact models were designed for shooters seeking a low-profile optic with higher magnification. Full-size models cater to American hunters seeking exceptional quality optics at a reasonable price, and feature a ballistic MOA reticle with an illuminated micro-dot in the second focal plane. Select models are equipped with zero-stop locking exposed .25-MOA ballistic turrets. Blank turrets are available for custom engraving as needed.

www.gpo-usa.com



Hawke Frontier 30 FFP 4-20x50mm

The Frontier 30 First Focal Plane (FFP) 4-20x50mm Rifle scope (\$1,199) features Hawke Optics' most advanced H7 optics with a high zoom ratio and supreme clarity and light transmission. Designed for hunters and target shooters, it has a 30mm monotube chassis and is equipped with a multi-LED High Intensity illuminated glass reticle, exposed Zero Lock 'N' Stop turret, 21 layer fully multicoated lens and fast-focus eye bell with lock ring. The Frontier 30 has 4 inches of eye relief and is nitrogen purged, shock-proof, waterproof and fog proof. It is all-caliber rated and comes with professional metal flip-up covers, removable throw lever and 4-inch sunshade.

www.hawkeoptics.com



Leapers Integrix ix6 4.5-27x56mm FFP

The culmination of integrated and intelligent optical design and manufacturing, the Leapers Integrix ix6 4.5-27x56mm FFP Rifle scope (\$2,499.97) is the result of expert development and evaluation and countless hours of testing. German and Japanese glass lenses used exclusively in every Integrix optic are individually centration tested, multicoated for glare, reflection and scratch resistance, and upon assembly are inspected for concentricity as a whole. Integrix riflescopes feature optimized image quality with over 92% light transmission, edge-to-edge sharpness, minute distortion and high-contrast resolution. They are equipped with left-side parallax control, red and green reticle illumination with light brightness settings, intuitive lockable and zero resettable windage and elevation turrets and much more. www.leapers.com



Legacy Sports Nikko Stirling 4-16x44mm Diamond FFP

The compact Nikko Stirling 4-16x44mm Diamond FFP rifle scope from Legacy Sports (\$379) features first focal plane optics, which means the image and reticle increase in the same proportion, allowing for shot corrections at any magnification with its corresponding 1/10-mil click value. The Diamond's rugged 30mm main body tube delivers the maximum range of adjustment, clarity and brightness for uncompromised performance and excellent field of view, even in low light. It features a glass-etched, illuminated skeleton HMD reticle and microlux ETE Gen. III glass coatings. It comes with a lifetime warranty and is waterproof, shockproof and nitrogen filled. www.legacysports.com

Trijicon Tenmile HX 5-25x50mm First Focal Plane

Trijicon has expanded its Tenmile HX Series to include the 5-25x50mm first focal plane (FFP) rifle scope (\$2,190). Designed for serious hunters, it ensures speed and precision at all hunting distances and features outstanding glass, highly repeatable adjusters and a purpose-built first focal plane MOA-based illuminated reticle. The FFP reticle offers red or green center dot illumination for contrast against all backgrounds and contains uncluttered MOA elevation and windage subtensions that can be used at any power setting without additional calculations. An easy focus eyepiece accommodates each shooter's prescription, while a repositionable magnification lever accommodates different shooting positions and rifle configurations. The Tenmile HX 5-25x50mm delivers edge-to-edge image clarity via fully multicoated broadband anti-reflective glass with excellent light transmission, true detail and color with zero distortion. www.trijicon.com





Leupold Mark 4HD 4.5-18x52mm FFP

The Mark 4HD 4.5-18x52mm FFP Riflescope from Leupold (\$1,599.99) features a 4:1 zoom ratio to give hunters accurate and reliable close-quarter to long-range shooting capabilities. This first focal plane (FFP) riflescope is equipped with a 34mm main tube with mil or MOA reticle adjustments. Illuminated push-button operated reticle options are also available with Leupold's Motion Sensor technology (MST), which will put the illumination to sleep after five minutes of inactivity, reactivating it as soon as the scope moves. The push-button ZeroLock dial system eliminates accidental dial movement and allows a rapid return to zero. Select models feature a similar ZeroLock windage turret. New with the Mark 4HD is the PR3-mil reticle, which provides a clutter-free image for fast, precision aiming. www.leupold.com



Vortex Razor HD LHTTM 4.5-22x50mm FFP

The Razor HD LHTTM 4.5-22x50mm FFP Riflescope from Vortex (\$1,999.99) answers every demand of the long-range hunter, and it does it all with an optic that's still among the lightest in its class. Vortex took its top-tier Razor HD LHTTM scope and built its big brother, keeping the incredibly light and tough form factor while adding first focal plane functionality and a higher magnification range. It is equipped with the company's XLR-2 reticle system, which is intuitive and easy to use. There's even push-button illumination to keep your point of aim clear in low light. The Razor is equipped with a locking elevation turret and RevStop Zero System for a reliable return to zero after dialing. www.vortexoptics.com

Schmidt & Bender Meta 3-18x42mm

The 3-18x42mm Meta Riflescope (Starting at \$3,330) is the newest development in hunting optics from Schmidt & Bender. This compact, powerful and versatile optic combines all the relevant features that make it a true all-rounder. Its slim and short aircraft grade aluminum 30mm tube saves weight and yet is rugged for combining it with night-vision devices. The scope's optical design combines superb image quality with a great field of view along with extremely high light transmission. A newly designed BDC II-B (bullet drop compensation) feature is equipped with a sophisticated elevation turret that can be calibrated to the ballistics of a specific rifle/load. The 3-18x42mm Meta is made by hunters for hunters who seek an advanced riflescope for their hunting applications. www.schmidtundbender.com



Sightmark Presidio 3-18x50mm MR2

Designed for hunters and mid- to long-range shooters, the Presidio 3-18x50mm MR2 Riflescope features multicoated glass for a crisp field of view and a fine-etched, red-illuminated, first-focal-plane reticle with mil-dash subtensions. It is also equipped with knurled pop-up locking turrets with .1-mil per click adjustments, adjustable parallax and diopter, and a robust, durable, single-piece 30mm aircraft-grade aluminum tube finished in matte-black anodizing. For reliability in gritty environments, the Presidio MR2 is IP67-rated waterproof, dustproof and shockproof, with a recoil rating up to .338-caliber and includes a Sightmark's lifetime warranty. It comes with flip-up lens caps, throw lever and CR2032 battery. MSRP: \$399.97. www.sightmark.com



Zeiss Conquest V4 6-24x50mm

Offering a maximum magnification of 24X, the Conquest V4 6-24x50mm (\$1,349.99-\$1,399.99) is Zeiss' most powerful option in the Conquest V4 riflescope family. With side parallax compensation, external elevation turret with Ballistic Stop, MOA-based smart reticles and available illumination, this riflescope is popular for longer-range hunting and precision shooting — boasting a whopping 80 MOA of elevation travel. The External Locking Windage Turret option is an excellent choice for the long-range hunting and shooting enthusiast. The Conquest V4 is available with five MOA-based, illuminated, second focal plane, smart reticle options. For those who prefer the time-tested duplex-style reticle, this model is also now available with the #60 reticle with an illuminated center red dot. www.zeiss.com



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BY GORDY KRAHN

HUNTING RETAILER NEW PRODUCTS



RAVIN R50X CROSSBOW

The all-new Ravin R50X Crossbow was designed to enhance and extend the overall user experience — its DuoMax Cam System combining technological advancements that revolutionized the crossbow hunting experience. The DuoMax cam collaborates seamlessly with advanced string technology to achieve an impressive 360-degree rotation, transferring massive amounts of harnessed energy with maximum rotational stabilization. The R50X delivers a staggering velocity of 505 fps with a 400-grain arrow and boasts a sleek axle-to-axle width of 4 inches when cocked (8 inches when un-cocked). Other key features include the Versa-draw Cocking System, with a minimal 12 pounds of cocking force, Trac-trigger Firing System, allowing for straight-line nock travel, Frictionless Flight System and a Silent Cocking System. MSRP: \$2,449.99 www.ravincrossbows.com



IRISH SETTER FIFTY BOOT

The 6-inch leather Setter Fifty Boot from Irish Setter delivers a powerful combination of classic styling and modern features that provides a comfortable fit for after work or after the hunt. Updated for a new generation, this boot takes its cues from the original Irish Setter boot, including the iconic white wedge sole, pinched moc stitching detail and a timeless silhouette. Full-grain leather is sustainably sourced, and the outsole is constructed from 51 percent recycled content. The CuShin comfort tongue reduces pressure on the shin and a highly breathable stretch nylon collar adds ankle comfort. Setter Fifty boots also have a pull loop that makes them easy to get on and off. MSRP: \$169.99 www.irishsetterboots.com

REMINGTON PREMIER ACCUTIP MUZZLELOADER BULLETS

Remington Ammunition has announced a new bullet exclusively engineered for muzzleloaders, the Premier AccuTip MZ. Designed for muzzleloader hunting with both modern or traditional .50-caliber rifles, it provides exceptional accuracy and dramatic performance on big game. The Premier AccuTip MZ's bonded 260-grain bullet is guided by the innovative Power Port tip, the same technology used in Remington's popular Premier AccuTip rifled shotgun slugs. On impact, the tip enables quick expansion for deadly energy transfer while the bonded bullet provides optimal penetration and 97 percent+ weight retention. Tested and accurate with all leading muzzleloading propellants, Premier AccuTip MZ's bonded bullets are paired with an easy loading sabot for quick reloads. MSRP: \$22.99/Package of 12 www.remington.com



BUSHNELL LPX650 TWO-WAY RADIOS

Bushnell has announced the introduction of a new line of two-way radios under a brand license partnership with Shine Flex. These radios are ideal for hunters, campers, hikers or anyone else who wants to stay connected while off the grid. Bushnell Two-Way Radios have been designed to deliver the best performance. With the maximum power output allowed by the FCC, users get extended range and secure communication with up to 70 channels to choose from, with 121 privacy codes per channel. The top of the line LPX650 model features 2-watt power output, up to 42-mile range, IPX67 waterproof rating, built-in LED flashlight, five-level VOX, vibration alert, NOAA weather alerts, rechargeable batteries, charging dock, USB-C cables and belt clips. MSRP: \$99.99/Two-pack bushnell.com



HEVI-SHOT 28-GAUGE TURKEY LOADS

Hevi-Shot Ammunition is now manufacturing 3-inch, 28-gauge turkey loads in its Hevi-18 TSS and Magnum Blend product lines. Hevi-18 Tungsten Super Shot (TSS) Turkey uses high-density 18g/cc pellets and friction-reducing spherical buffer to extend effective range, allowing hunters to drop three shot sizes from common lead payloads and get higher pellet counts and denser patterns. The new 3-inch, 28-gauge loads are available in shot sizes Nos. 7 and 9. Magnum Blend offers three shot sizes (Nos. 5, 6 and 7) in a single shell. The 12g/cc cast tungsten lets hunters drop one shot size from lead for the same lethality. Hevi-Shot's Magnum Blend Turkey line now consists of five load options. MSRP: \$61.99/Hevi-18/Box of five; \$39.99/Magnum/Box of five www.hevishot.com

CROSMAN PROSPECT AIR RIFLE

The Prospect PCP Air Rifle was designed for shooters who demand power and precision — whether they're plinking in the backyard or competing in target shooting events. Its barrel has a built-in suppressor and 1/2-20 muzzle threads to accept an external moderator for even quieter operation. Available in .177- and .22-calibers, the Prospect delivers up to 1,000 fps (.177) or 900 fps (.22) of muzzle velocity, and its rotary magazine holds 12 shots in .177-caliber and 10 shots in .22-caliber. It is equipped with an all-weather stock and is built to withstand the elements. A Picatinny rail on top of the receiver makes it easy to mount optics, and the Prospect's regulator ensures shot-to-shot consistency. MSRP: Starting at \$369.99 www.crosman.com





WEATHERBY SORIX SEMI-AUTO SHOTGUN

Weatherby recently added the optics-ready Sorix Semi-Auto Shotgun to its esteemed firearms lineup, designed for reliability, performance and adaptability — built on the field proven inertia recoil system. The durable, ergonomic Sorix uniquely accommodates left-handed hunters with Weatherby's Shift System — a cut on the left side of the receiver allows lefties to easily swap the charging handle, and the safety can be reversed. Other key features include a competition cut receiver and oversize controls, stepped rib and LPA fiber-optic sight, adjustable stock shims, hand-painted brush patterns — Midnight Marsh, Storm and Slough — and the Crio Plus choke system: MSRP: \$1,499 www.weatherby.com



ANTLER KING EVERYTHING BUT THE KITCHEN SINK PREMIUM FEED

For a healthy herd and optimal antler growth, deer need comprehensive nutrition. That's why Antler King developed a premium feed that features just about everything — Everything But the Kitchen Sink. With an expertly crafted blend of high-quality oats, wheat, corn, barley, protein pellets and more, it provides the essential nutrients for nurturing deer populations. This product enhances antler growth, supports functions such as muscle development, immune system function and healthy digestion, boosts energy throughout all seasons and contributes to a lustrous coat. Everything But the Kitchen Sink attracts deer and keeps them coming back for more. MSRP: \$34.99/40-pound bag antlerking.com



GARMONT T8 FALCON BOOT

A tactical/hunting boot with a sporty design, the T8 Falcon from Garmont is made from sturdy materials, such as leather, with more flexible ones, such as nylon, offering unparalleled support in this lightweight design. The soft Magnet sole offers a responsive feel when speeding across the terrain, performing activities that require control and agility, while the inner shank provides support during long hikes. The boots are a standard 8-inch height sporting a 1.8mm suede leather upper with polyester inserts, speed lacing with anchoring loops and closed-hook eyelets. An Ortholite Ultra footbed provides cushioning and breathability. The T8 Falcon is well suited for mavericks wishing to break with conventions when navigating the outdoors. MSRP: \$104 www.garmonttactical.com



SITKA TURKEY TOOL BELT

The Turkey Tool Belt from Sitka combines innovative features to ensure easy terrain navigation, call management and overall preparedness — allowing hunters to maneuver the woods with confidence without being weighed down by a conventional turkey vest. This minimalistic call- and gear-management system merges the simplicity of a hip pack with the specialized storage of a full-featured vest. To deploy, simply drop the removable seat pad and spin the pack to the front of the body to access an array of call pockets. There is plenty of room for other essentials, plus compression straps to secure added layers often necessary for unruly spring weather. The molded front call pocket stows two pot calls, four strikers and six diaphragm calls. MSRP: \$229 www.sitkagear.com

SAVAGE 110 MAGPUL SCOUT RIFLE

The Savage Arms 110 Magpul Scout Rifle features an updated iron sight system, full length extended Picatinny rail and Magpul Hunter stock — engineered to perform in any environment, whether it's hunting, target shooting or tactical applications. It is equipped with a 16.5-inch matte black button-rifle barrel with muzzle brake, integrated and removable rear peep sights and a fully adjustable AR-15 style front sight post for elevation. Magpul rifle stocks are well known for exceptional grip that produces rapid and accurate target acquisition. The 110 Magpul Scout and its Magpul Hunter stock with aluminum bedding block provides the user with consistent and long-lasting performance in a wide variety of shooting conditions. MSRP: \$1,099 www.savagearms.com



RINEHART BIGHORN SHEEP TARGET

The Signature 1/2-Scale Bighorn Sheep Target is engineered with precision and crafted from Rinehart's renowned Signature solid, self-healing foam — allowing archers to experience the thrill of a bighorn sheep hunt right in their own backyard. This 3D target is anatomically reduced to 1/2-scale size of a simulated 140-pound ram, which means shooting at 30 yards feels like taking a 60-yard shot in the wild. The target features the company's patented Signature series replaceable locking insert (sold separately) to further enhance the longevity of the target. Incorporated score lines help facilitate practice of shot placement, enhancing shooting precision. Additionally, the 1/2-scale Bighorn Sheep target accommodates both compound bows and crossbows, catering to a diverse range of archers and their preferences. MSRP: \$350 www.rinehart3d.com



Then and Now

As in many aspects of life, hunting is going through a serious old school/new school transition. But are things really getting better?

BY BOB ROBB

One of the great joys of my life has been the process of success, not necessarily success itself. To me, anything in life achieved through hard work and perseverance means so much more than something gained easily, with no sweat equity. I first learned that lesson in sports. I was a huge fan of the early Green Bay Packers and their legendary coach, Vince Lombardi, who once famously said, “Success is like anything worthwhile. It has a price. You have to pay the price to win and you have to pay the price to get to the point where success is possible. Most important, you must pay the price to stay there.”

I was never the biggest, fastest or strongest, but I was willing to pay the price in both time and effort, and fortunately, I did achieve some success.

This was a lesson applied to all I did in life, believing, as Mick Jagger once said, “Everything worth doing is worth overdoing.”

When the hunting bug bit me, I went at it with all I had. Not being raised in a hunting household and before the internet made information gathering as easy as clicking a mouse, I read magazines and books and spent much of my free time exploring the woods. I wrote my first outdoor columns back in the mid-1970s and got my first full-time job in the business in 1978. In my mid-20s living out West, I wanted to hunt mule

deer and elk in the high mountain country I’d read so much about. So I started training physically all year round to be able to hunt backcountry areas on foot, filled file cabinets with topographic maps and harvest statistics, and spent countless hours in libraries and state land offices searching for little public-land hidey holes where access in and around private ranches was not easily found.

I’d always been a rifle shooter, and started handloading in the ’70s, which was required to achieve the sub-MOA accuracy you can get today with most any mid-priced rifle and factory ammo. Then the bowhunting bug bit me, in no small part because I found punching tags with a rifle was starting to become pretty easy. Because sneaking into bow range of any animal was, and still is, really hard, and learning to put together and maintain an accurate compound bow-and-arrow setup requires a huge commitment of time for regular practice sessions, I was all in. When I worked in the Los Angeles area for *Petersen’s Hunting* magazine, I helped start, and was the first editor of, *Petersen’s Bowhunting* magazine. So, three days a week I would get up at 0400 for an hour’s run, then drive an hour on the cusp of freeway rush hour to a public park where I could shoot my bows for an hour, then drive 45 minutes to a gym I belonged to so I could shower and change, then be at my desk by 0900. It was a

pain in the petunias, but it enabled me to be a successful bowhunter. And those successes were all the sweeter because of it.

This all came home to me last November, when I hunted mule deer in Arizona with a young man in his mid-20s. The difference between he and I at the same age was like night and day. It was classic old school vs. new school. I doubt he could have navigated the country without OnX on his smartphone; he’d never used a topographic map in his life. Decked out in high-dollar Kuiu clothing, he had probably 10 grand worth of optics, an expensive custom rifle and scope with custom ballistic turret, and he bragged about how he and his buddies could shoot a deer out to half a mile. Like most Gen Z’ers I’ve met, he had no idea who some of the “old school” heroes of hunting are, nor did he have knowledge of the history of how modern hunting came to be, the evolution of modern equipment, or even what the Pittman-Robertson Act was. He did not spend any time or money supporting groups like Sportsman’s Alliance or have knowledge of the political issues that threaten hunting today. His hunting life revolved around technology and a plan on how, over the next two decades, he might be able to draw a handful of premium-unit mule deer and elk tags out West. Why read a book when you can watch multiple minutes-long “horn porn” videos on

the phone?

Time does indeed march on. Today, it seems to me, more and more of the younger generation are into instant success. Why spend all that time and energy to become proficient with a compound bow when you can take a new high-tech, scoped cross-bow out of the box and immediately hit the bull’s-eye at 50-plus yards, shot after shot? Why learn to stalk close to a buck, bull or bear when you can snipe it at with the aid of a ballistic turret? Why spend all that time sharpening a knife when you can quickly switch a dull blade for one that’s scalpel sharp? Why spend countless days afield learning to become a real woodsman when electronics can do your scouting for you? Why take the time to carefully craft a short written piece describing your time on a hunt, each word carefully chosen to stimulate another’s imagination, when you can create short video segments on your smartphone, then post them to your social media accounts for all the world to see?

While I’m not a “get off my lawn” guy, I do wonder where the reliance on technology will take us. What about you? Is this good or bad, or does it make any difference at all? Drop me a note at editor@grandviewoutdoors.com and let me know. I’d love to hear your thoughts. **HR**



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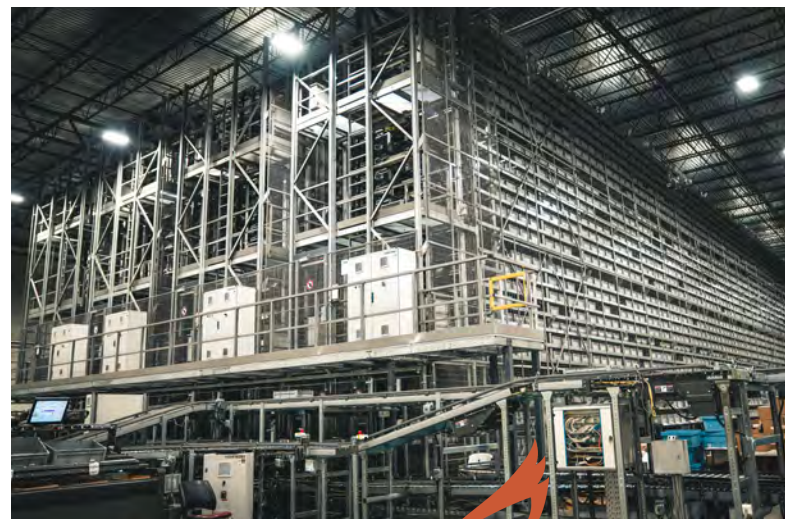


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