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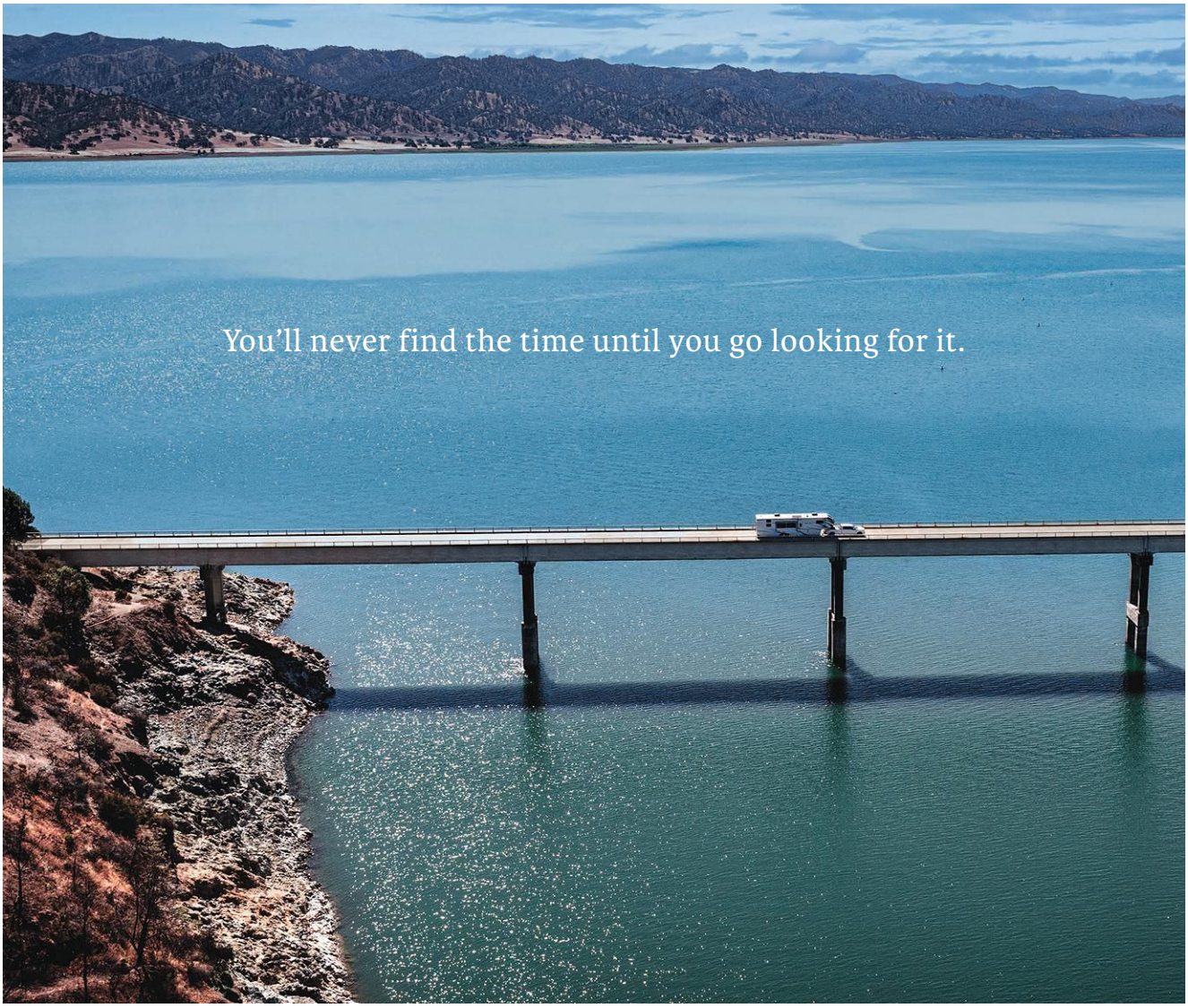






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MORE OF WHAT MATTERS

RV PRO



On Monday morning, I walked into Cahaba Media Group (CMG) – RV PRO's parent company – and a delicious, sweet scent immediately hit me.

Waffles!

As I entered our conference room, I saw bowls of raspberries, cans of whipped cream, bottles of syrup and four waffle makers, hot and ready for my coworkers and me.

This isn't typical for Monday mornings at CMG – but breakfast is. Ever since January, when our CEO Matthew Conroy announced we could work from home whenever we chose – except for 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Mondays, when we'd have breakfast, a company-wide 15-minute meeting and department meetings – we've gathered for a bite to eat and fellowship before starting our week.

It may seem small, but it's fun and practical things like this new working arrangement that contribute to our company culture.

This month, RV PRO highlights two companies that take their culture – and their duty as leaders – to heart: Lippert and Storyteller Overland.

On pg. 36, read how Lippert President and CEO Jason Lippert turned the tide of his company's culture and what he thinks makes a good leader. Storyteller Overland, pg. 40, knew its people were so vital to its success, the adventure van builder hired Chief People Officer Christina Linton to make sure its one-of-a-kind vibe continued to foster its internal – and external – community.

We also learn how Susan Carpenter and Denise Chariya with RV Women's Alliance, pg. 44, are ensuring that female leaders are supported and developing the industry's next generation of leaders through mentorship.

On pg. 47, learn more from Nathan Hart, chairman of the RV Dealers Association, who says being a part of RVDA helped his growth as a leader and why he advocates for more dealers to get involved.

And six members of RV Industry Association (RVIA)'s Emerging Leaders Coalition – including Chair Ryan Elias – tell us what the coalition has done for their own development and what the coalition has in store for up-and-coming leaders.

Next, be sure to check out Phil Perry's article and quiz, "Are You a Good Manager?" on pg. 54. He provides real food for thought and actionable takeaways. Finally, Sterling Hawkins – the keynote speaker at RVIA's Leadership Conference earlier this year – writes in this issue about having a #NoMatterWhat approach. Read that insightful piece on pg. 58.

Now, I'm not saying a waffle bar on Monday mornings will solve all your company culture woes, but breakfast is the most important meal of the day, right? And as we point out in this issue: people spend one-third of their lives at work. As an industry, it only benefits us to take a look at our culture and leadership and make sure both are up to par.

As always, thanks for reading!

Jennifer King



Jessica Graham, managing editor for Butane Propane News – one of RV PRO's sister publications – at Cahaba Media Group's waffle breakfast

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THOR Industries Remarks on Passing of KZ RV CEO Aram Koltookian

THOR Industries announced the death of KZ RV's CEO Aram Koltookian, who passed away unexpectedly on May 3. The following is the parent company's statement.

"It is with heavy hearts and great sadness that THOR Industries announces the passing of KZ Recreational Vehicles president and CEO, Aram Koltookian. Aram passed away unexpectedly on Wednesday.

"Aram was passionately dedicated to his family. He leaves behind his wife and two sons. The loss felt by his passing cannot be put into words.

"A long-time dedicated leader in the RV industry, Aram started on a dealership lot owned by his father, became a general manager at Keystone, executive vice president of Dutchmen and ultimately the president and CEO of KZ. His tremendous work ethic and ability to consider unique solutions to challenges was key in helping propel the business.

"Aram had a passion for providing families with the opportunity to create lifelong memories. His long-term commitment to KZ, THOR, KZ's dealer partners and owners was integral to both his personal success and the success of KZ, and truly made him one of a kind."

THOR President and CEO Bob Martin said, "Aram has been a trusted friend and colleague for nearly 30 years. We started in the industry together as sales reps at Coachmen RV Company and transitioned to Keystone where we shared a sales territory.

"Aram played a notable role in the success of our company and, more significantly, has always been an important friend to my family. That will be a statement of which I'll be immensely proud for the rest of my life. Aram will be deeply missed by many."

As the THOR family navigates this loss, its North American RV group manager, Matt Zimmerman, will be interim president and CEO of KZ RV.

"The KZ team is grateful for the partnerships and support of their dealers and suppliers and looks forward to continuing the path to success shaped by Aram, together."

Black Folks Camp Too Scores Private Campground Partnership

Black Folks Camp Too (BFCT) has partnered with Spacious Skies Campgrounds, a fast-growing and culturally conscious collection of campgrounds in the eastern United States. Spacious Skies is now the first Unity Blaze Certified campground, which confirms that all 14 of its private campgrounds and their management team are committed to "Treating Everyone, Everywhere, Equally" – the Unity Blaze motto. While Spacious Skies said it has always firmly held this belief, its leadership wanted to partner with BFCT to make sure all campground staff completed the Unity Blaze training program.

Unity Blaze training is a comprehensive education platform that illuminates "why" many Black folks are not accessing the great outdoors. Specifically, the generational fears and knowledge gaps of the outdoor lifestyle that Black folks and communities of color face and have experienced, as well as the overall lack of invitation.

"Certified Unity Blaze campgrounds understand the importance of cultural awareness in regard to creating and intentionally welcoming space for campers of all experiences and backgrounds," said Earl B. Hunter, Jr., founder of Black Folks Camp Too. "We are proud of Spacious Skies for taking the lead to help build more unity in the outdoor community and beyond."

"At Spacious Skies, our mission is to offer fun, relaxing and authentic campground experiences in beautiful natural settings. That mission was written with everyone in mind, regardless of one's race, age or gender. However, we have recognized a distinct lack of diversity on our campgrounds," said Ali Rasmussen, co-founder of Spacious Skies Campgrounds. "In meeting Black Folks Camp Too, they have helped us understand the reason why that is. We are proud to partner with BFCT so we can extend an intentional invitation to welcome Black campers and all campers of color to join the outdoor fun here in the Spacious Skies universe."

"The real power of Unity Blaze Certification lies in its symbolism. When folks of all races, ages and genders see the Unity Blaze symbol they know they are invited and welcomed. To that end, Spacious Skies Campground will feature the Unity Blaze Certification on their website and other marketing literature – as well as on-site at all campgrounds."

While Spacious Skies Campgrounds is the first campground collection to become Unity Blaze Certified, progress is underway with state parks and other campgrounds, as well. BFCT has already established the Unity Blaze symbol across the RV industry and outdoor retailer ecosystem, as part of an overall plan to inform communities that there is work being done in the industry to make sure everyone is sincerely and authentically welcomed to enjoy the outdoors.

Newmar Taps New VP of Sales to Replace Sammut

Newmar, a manufacturer of luxury RVs and wholly owned subsidiary of Winnebago Industries, announced that Matt Ellinger has been named its new vice president of sales.

In this role, Ellinger will lead and enhance Newmar's sales organization while managing key relationships with dealers. His first day will be April 17 and he will join the executive leadership team for Newmar and the key leadership team for parent company, Winnebago Industries.

"Matt has a long history driving revenue and market share growth using strategies learned over his 15 years of both wholesale and retail experience," said Casey Tubman, president at Newmar. "He is passionate about designing fresh new models and floorplans using influence with both engineering and product development teams to support our commercial growth efforts."

Most recently, Ellinger worked as a district sales manager for Winnebago, another Winnebago Industries business unit. Before joining Winnebago in 2019, Ellinger worked as a regional sales manager for Thor Motor Coach, as well as Grainger Industrial Supply, Harberson RV and MarineMax in a variety of sales focused roles.

"Newmar's reputation for industry-leading craftsmanship and excellence is unmatched," Ellinger said. "I'm thrilled to grow my career there and look forward to collaborating with the solid team already

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in place to deliver strong results for the organization."

The leadership transition comes after John Sammut, the current vice president of sales, announced he was retiring in May.

"I am thankful for (Sammut) and the many years he has supported the growth of Newmar," Tubman said. "Trust has been a key component of all of John's business relationships during his time in the RV industry. Colleagues and customers will miss him, and we wish him well in his retirement."

Winnebago to Acquire Lithium-ion Battery Producer

Winnebago Industries has reached a definitive agreement to acquire Lithionics Battery, a lithium-ion battery solutions provider to recreational equipment and specialty vehicle markets.

Acquiring Lithionics will provide Winnebago Industries with enhanced technological and engineering capabilities to offer consumers more differentiated products with innovative electrical solutions, the company said, as well as bring strategic sourcing benefits and secure a critical area of its supply chain. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Founded in 2010, Lithionics is a provider of advanced battery solutions that deliver "house power," supporting internal electrical features and appliances for a variety of outdoor products including RVs, boats, specialty and other low-speed vehicles, as well as other industrial applications. Its in-house power solutions extend time spent off-grid, improve reliability, reduce noise and generate fewer emissions, Lithionics said.

Lithionics is led by founder and CEO Steve Tartaglia and is headquartered in Clearwater, Florida.

"The addition of Lithionics enhances Winnebago Industries' ability to develop unique and diverse battery solutions across our portfolio, advancing our overall electrical ecosystem, driving organic growth and supply chain security, reinforcing our technological competitive advantage and allowing us to capitalize on consumer preferences for fully immersive, off-the-grid outdoor experiences," said Winnebago Industries President and CEO Michael Happe.

"Lithionics' talented employees bring a unique familiarity with our business and the broader outdoor recreation space, as well as share a commitment to quality and safety that fits seamlessly with our culture of excellence. We see significant opportunity to expand the use of their efficient energy solutions within our own portfolio, to continue to grow relationships with other existing customers and to explore new market applications.

"Through these applications, we expect Lithionics will enhance Winnebago Industries' margin profile over the near- and long-term and create value for our shareholders, employees and consumers. We look forward to working with Steve and his team to integrate their unique platform of electrical capabilities."

After the transaction closes, which is expected in Winnebago Industries' third fiscal quarter, Tartaglia and the current Lithionics management team will continue leading the business from its Florida headquarters.

Elkhart Commissioners Dedicate New Road to Jackie Walorski

Elkhart County (Indiana) Commissioners have dedicated the road behind the Amazon warehouse in Elkhart to the late Indiana District 2 U.S. Representative Jackie Walorski.

The newly-built road had previously been named C.R. 4 and resides between C.R. 17 and C.R. 19, and was designed for the Amazon building and the growing industrial park in the area. As reported in The Goshen News, the commissioners have named it "Walorski Parkway."

"We thought it was a proper thing to do," Commissioner Brad Rogers said. "We rename buildings and roadways for people who have done significant things for our community and Jackie Walorski is that true consummate servant (and) we wanted to honor her memory."

Walorski died in a head-on, two-vehicle collision Aug. 3, 2022, near Nappanee, along with two members of her staff – Zachery Potts, 27, Mishawaka, and Emma Thomson, 28, Washington, D.C. The sole occupant of the other vehicle, Edith Schmucker, 56, Nappanee, also died.

Following her death and at her funeral, dozens shared memories surrounding Walorski's passion for community, local business and industries, and caring disposition.

"Her support of local economy on the national level – like when she supported the tax cut and jobs act as well as when she opposed Trump's tariff's on goods like steel and aluminum – helped our local businesses stay open," Commissioner Suzie Weirick said.

The decision to name the road in honor of Walorski was made by the commissioners in December 2022 when they were given the opportunity to name the newly built road.

"Thinking of Jackie and all she did to set the stage for economic growth in Elkhart County and the collaborative spirit she brought to working with us as commissioners, helps all of our local leaders provide support to citizens and businesses," Weirick added.

BMPRO Names New Head of US Operations

BMPRO announced the promotion of Scott Hunter to the position of head of operations at its U.S. division. The company said Hunter's experience, accomplishments and dedication to the company's growth and success make him the ideal candidate for this role.

Scott Hunter has been an integral part of the BMPRO team for several years, and his leadership skills have helped drive the company's continued growth and success, it said. His experience in the RV industry has been invaluable, with a lifetime of exposure to the industry through his father's involvement.

Hunter officially joined BMPRO in 2015 after installing door access and security systems for various RV facilities.

Hunter's significant achievements within the company include his work with the U.S. division of BMPRO, taking the company from its early days to what it is today.

As he said, "The U.S. division of BMPRO is my biggest success thus far. I've been with BMPRO since before we even had an official mailing address, so taking the company from that to what it is now is a significant achievement."

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Spotlight on the Aftermarket

RVIA's annual conference in August is the one yearly get-together focused entirely on this vital segment of the industry.

BY TONY KINDELSPIRE

Those who have been will tell you – the analogies between the RV Industry Association (RVIA)'s Aftermarket Conference and an evening spent speed dating are spot-on.

This year's conference is Aug. 7-10 at the Hyatt Regency Mission Bay Spa and Marina in San Diego, California.

For three days, conference attendees gather in a hotel for a series of pre-scheduled meetings with RV aftermarket suppliers and wholesale distributors who will get their products into the market.

"It's kind of like speed dating between the suppliers and distributors, and that goes on pretty much all day during the three-day event," says Jeremy Greene, an RVIA staff member and liaison to its Aftermarket Committee. "Day one is our golf tournament, but Tuesday through Thursday is all speed dating."

John Tinghitella is the RVIA Aftermarket Committee chairman and owner of RV Designer, which supplies aftermarket hardware and other parts for RVs. He's been going to the conference for years and calls it three of the biggest days on the calendar for companies like his. Even though many of the same wholesaler distributors are there every year, it's his chance to show off new products and product lines and cultivate relationships that date back decades, in some cases.

And for newbies to the aftermarket? It's a must-go event.

"If you're a new supplier coming in, and you want to get into the industry quick, it's an incredibly efficient way as a new supplier who shows up in the aftermarket with a portfolio of products," Tinghitella says. "The idea of this thing is you can come and meet with all the wholesalers in the market in one three-day period."

But it's not all just constant presentations and dealmaking. The networking opportunities are valuable, he says, and as committee chairman, he helps ensure education is a part of it.

The Aftermarket Committee was assimilated into the RVIA in 2017, but it dates back decades to when it was called the Warehouse Distributor Association for Leisure and Mobile Products. The annual conference dates back more than a half-century and is the sole annual gathering among members of this vital and lucrative segment of the RV industry.

"On Tuesday, we have the RV Aftermarket Awards, which are during lunch," Greene says. "That's kind of always been a linchpin of this event – an opportunity to highlight some of the great companies, and products as well, in the aftermarket over the past year."

On Wednesday afternoon, there is a two-and-a-half-hour aftermarket research presentation.

"One of the ways that RVIA helps the aftermarket [understand the consumer] is through research," Greene says. "So, we're coming up on our third iteration of our aftermarket research – customer preferences and understanding of the aftermarket parts and accessories market. And so Wednesday during lunch we'll have a breakdown of that research. And then in an afternoon workshop session, we're really diving into that research even more, with some hands-on activity on how companies can take advantage of all the findings in that research to better be able to understand the customer – what they're looking for."

Adds Tinghitella: "We'll try and steer the research in a direction that will deliver to membership new information about the consumer, vis-a-vis parts and accessories. It's going to also build somewhat on some research that we did in 2018 and 2019. We initiated our inaugural research surveys then. We went out to 800 consumers, 400 of which are under the age of 45, 400 of which are over the age of 45, trying to get a little demographic slant there, and we asked a lot of questions: How do you like to buy products? Where do you like to buy products? What's important to you when you buy a product?

"The second year we came back and ratcheted it down a little tighter and said OK, here are a handful of potential RV aftermarket systems – climate control, hitching and towing, electrical, sanitation, roof replacement ... and asked, when you buy products, when you install products, when you do this in the aftermarket, are you satisfied? Are you not satisfied? What would you like to see better?

"The idea is we're trying to catch the consumer where they're at in their RV journey," Tinghitella says. "A lot has happened since 2019, God knows. The demographics have shifted ... we don't have to relive the past, but there's been a lot of motion in the marketplace. And we want to get a feel for where [a consumer's] head is at. ... And then we, as membership, we are going to really work and interrogate ourselves: What did we learn and what do we do with this information? Information is great, but it doesn't really become knowledge until you understand how you can use it for a good purpose."

For more information on the 2023 Aftermarket Conference, visit rvia.org/events/rv-aftermarket-conference. RVP

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Newmar's Dealer Meeting Debuts Lineup Makeovers

A farewell to John Sammut and the latest in three lineups were unveiled at the manufacturer's annual event.

BY TONY KINDELSPIRE



Jeff Hirsch from Campers Inn gave a surprise speech recognizing John Sammut's years of service for Newmar. He talked about Sammut's virtues and how much of Newmar's success is due to Sammut seeking out the right dealers for the manufacturer. Sammut received a standing ovation, his second of the event.

This year's edition of the annual Newmar Dealer Meeting in Colorado Springs, Colorado, was somewhat of a bittersweet affair. On March 30, the company learned of the death of its former owner and co-founder, Mahlon Miller, who guided Newmar into the upper echelon of RV manufacturers.

2023 also marked the final dealers meeting for John Sammut, who retired at the end of May after 19 years with the company. Sammut was vice president of sales and was known for taking the stage in various get-ups to introduce new products and product upgrades.

"I would be remiss not to say thank you," Sammut told the audience at the end of his new presentation. "It has been a privilege to be part of the Newmar leadership team. It has truly been my honor and privilege. Thank you so much."

From there, the 200-plus attendees had a couple days to explore 2024 units and visit with suppliers at the Broadmoor Hotel and Resort's convention hall.

As usual, the biggest updates to any models came in the form of "life cycle changes," which means a major overhaul and updates carefully planned by the units' engineers and designers – the "next generation" of that particular line.

For model year 2024, three Newmar brands were up for life cycle changes: the Super Star, Ventana and London Aire.

The Super Star Super C motorhome will come in six floorplans, with the all-new 3731 floorplan leading the way. The 3731 – a bath-and-a-half model with a full wall slide – and other floorplans have newly designed fascia and feature ceilings. The interior cab of the unit is nicely framed and looks like you are entering a new room of the motorhome.

Up front, Freightliner has completely upgraded the dash design, instrumentation layout and radio on its M2 chassis. This is true for the M2-106 chassis used for Super Star, as well as the M2-112 chassis on which Newmar's Supreme Aire is built.

Also new in 2024 is that both M2 chassis now feature Freightliner's Detroit Assurance Safety System. This system delivers many automotive safety features including object and pedestrian detection, active brake assist, automatic headlights, intelligent high beams and auto rain sense wipers.

The Detroit Assurance 5.0 Lane Departure warning system alerts the driver through a visual warning in the dash, as well as audible warning through the speakers. There is no haptic feedback in the driver's seat, and the system has an off switch that disables the system for 15 minutes when desired – such as when driving through a construction zone.

A tire pressure monitoring system comes as a standard feature on the 2024 Super Star.

Newmar's Ventana brand shares the same interior design elements as the Super Star, including any changes for the 2024 model year, except the Super Star has optional heated tile floors.

The 2024 Ventana Class A includes four new floorplans and 10 floorplans overall. The 34-foot and 37-foot models offered last year have been lengthened by a foot; those four floorplans are the 3507, 3512, 3809 and 3817 for the 2024 model year.

These floorplans will feature a Cummins L-9 engine with a 380-horsepower rating. The additional foot of length outside was needed to accommodate the larger power plant as well as the engine cage that houses it. Along with a bigger motor, the extra 12 inches allows additional space for the kitchen, bathroom or bedroom. An optional sleeping area is available in all 2024 Ventana models.

The redesigned Ventana dash features larger 9-inch Xite monitors and a restyled interior includes new furniture styling, slide-out fascia, feature ceiling designs and a revamped living space.

The London Aire luxury mobile home will have five options for 2024 that include a Splendide two-piece stacked washer and dryer and slide-out fascia and feature ceiling. The London Aire '45 has a Cummins X15 with 605-horsepower engine on a Spartan RV Chassis and a new exterior with front and rear caps, graphics and paint colors.

Inside, an all-new interior design has newly styled elements including furniture, feature ceiling, slide out fascias and new window treatments, along with updates to the kitchen, bath and bedroom spaces.

The all-electric feature is standard, and the Silverleaf panel has been relocated from the front overhead to the center of the coach, so now it's easier to access and read, the company said. That change is applicable to all the 2024 Newmar products that feature Silverleaf. RVP

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An Office with a View

Recognizing the growing trend of remote work, Keystone RV's **Montana** debuts its front office floorplan and describes its creative process.

BY JENNIFER KING

Remote work isn't going anywhere. A monthly survey by Stanford University found that 27% of full-time paid workers are fully remote, The New York Times reported in March. The survey consisted of 10,000 workers across cities and industries.

The RV industry is well aware of this trend and has fully embraced it – as is evident in floorplan designs that increasingly include a workspace.

The Keystone Montana 3941FO is a prime example of this – the "FO" in the model number stands for "front office," and if you immediately envision a roomy desk with a large window, well, you'd be right on the nose.

"Especially during COVID, that was the thing that we heard the most of – all of these people starting to work more and more remotely," says Nick Ebenroth, product manager for Montana, Fuzion and Impact. "We constantly heard this feedback of these customers that were getting extremely innovative, and they were using their dining room table and they're setting up shop there just to work, or they've got little TV-type trays and they're working off of their sofas. Or in some of toy hauler floorplans, they've gutted the garage and made a whole entire office in the back.

"We just kept talking from behind [the] scenes here at Montana: How do we build a floorplan that fits that? We'd love to



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KEYSTONE





just make it a dedicated office. So, as we kind of work through the layout, one of the things that one of our No. 1 selling floorplans has is our front living room unit.

"That front living, one of the neat things about it is that it has a front windshield. And so, customers that go have...really neat views of the lake or the mountains or the desert out the front. They can see that while they're sitting up watching TV... [but] what if we did an office configuration where you still get that front living, but we shift the space a little bit and make that your office, and now you could sit and do work with this really cool backdrop while we're at it."

A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

In addition to the view, there's plenty about the front office space that makes it a good place to set up your laptop and get to work while out on the road.

"One of the big things that we wanted to make sure we did first is put a door on it so it has an actual door that closes off," Ebenroth says. "Once you're done working, you want to be able to close it off and put it away and then go enjoy your time with your family.

"In addition, if you've got calls that you want to make during the day, you can close it off and feel like you've got some space. And then we did a few things inside there. When you walk in, it's got a big L-shaped counter in the corner, and that L-shaped countertop gives you the spot for your office chair and whatever else you want to set up there. We've got four drawers on that left side, so all of your pencils and pens and office supply things can sit there."

Another feature that makes the space feel more office-like is the corkboard to hang notes or photos, Ebenroth says. There is also plenty of space to add a stand-up desk setup or additional monitors if needed, instead of solely having to work off a laptop. There is a power source available under the L-shaped desk with a hole that you can feed cords down and keep them out of the way, he says.

There's also a large roller shade that can be pulled down to cover up the windshield when needed, and a couple storage areas for a printer, filing cabinet or other needs.

"One of the other things that I think was important when we were making decisions was we wanted to make sure that there's an air conditioning vent that's up there," Ebenroth says. "So that way if you have that closed off, you've got a vent that you can make sure you're keeping that room cool so it doesn't get overly hot. Then also on that door side, there is a window there that does two things: helps add more natural light, which you get plenty of it from your front windshield, but that one on the door side actually opens. So then that way you're getting cross ventilation into that space."

MAKING ROOM FOR LIVING

To make space for the front office, Ebenroth says they kept their "tried and proven" front living room intact and adjusted the layout by stealing a little space from the kitchen by removing the island.



Instead, to give owners plenty of counterspace, they included slot drawers that pull out.

"Those pull out [and] they basically make up a little peninsula on each side. The nice thing there is it gives you that extra countertop space that you would normally lose without your island. But they get tucked away when you don't need them," he says. "It gives you that extra countertop space and frees up the floor space."

The kitchen still includes a refrigerator slide and three deep cabinets with double-doors, plus an oversized 24-inch chef selection oven. There is also a table and chairs in a slide-out, Ebenroth says.

"Some of the feedback we got, which I hadn't thought of, when we were at Tampa SuperShow when we introduced this floorplan, some people said the other nice thing that you can do here is if we have a family where we want to eat a Thanksgiving-type dinner, you can push away those rollouts and have a giant six person table – an extension or something...you can make that happen if you wanted to [with] an extra card table and chairs."

Heading to the other side of the kitchen is the primary bedroom and bathroom off the hallway so that guests don't have to go through the bedroom to use the facilities.

"Once you get into the bedroom, you still get a big king bed slide with the washer/dryer prep and plenty of hanging space," he says. "One of the things that we wanted to make sure we did when we built this was raise that back end...What that does is it gives you a big, giant pull-out storage tray underneath the bedroom. That has become one of the things that our customers continually ask for and appreciate because storage is key inside the unit, but storage is also key on the exterior of the unit.

"And it also gives us the option, too, where on the side of the coach, we actually have an outside kitchen where you've got...a 12-volt refrigerator drawer. And you also have a griddle that's out there, too – a griddle that pulls out and drops down. So, you have a nice little cooking station as well."

CONCEPTUALIZING NEW FLOORPLANS

Brainstorming for new floorplan ideas is constant, Ebenroth says.

"A lot of times we work on projects for a long time before they come to fruition before the public and our dealers and everybody else sees them," he says. "But the life cycle, the way we typically do it, is in the late summer, early fall, is typically our model year change."

Around the time of Open House in September, the brand will reveal new floorplans and other new partnerships or products.

"Our goal is to normally introduce those floorplans right around that time," Ebenroth says. "Our dealers are there to see new product and we can showcase it to them. Then they can bring in some of that new product in the fall. But they can also work on exiting their current inventory to make sure that they bring it in by winter for our show season, which starts in January for that coming year's show season."

But Ebenroth says there are other times when new floorplans are introduced, such as this 3941FO, which was introduced at the Florida RV SuperShow in Tampa.

Ebenroth's production team meets regularly to talk about where the product is and how to move it forward. They could be looking at décor, features, floorplans and more.



"So, then I'll sketch some stuff out [and] talk with our team, our sales team, our dealer base, what things they think they need. And then I get with our engineers and we try to piecemeal some stuff together to lay it out," he says.

"Then it's kind of just like playing with Legos, right? As you start kind of building it and figuring out, OK, does this fit here with this? Oh, that doesn't work. We'll bring in this part; this doesn't flow quite the way we'd like it to.

"That's the great thing about our engineers and how really impactful and brilliant they are on these systems where they can [see] that doesn't work. They're the brains behind it. I just come up with ideas and then they figure out if they can make it work."

COLLECTING FEEDBACK

The feedback the team received at the Tampa show was really positive, Ebenroth says – saying there was a noticeable buzz about the new layout.

"It's obvious there was a need for the unit. And when you build something that people ask for and then you build it and they really enjoy it, that's great," he says. "It's nice to build a floorplan that you feel like people need.

"We constantly want to bring features for plans, functionality to customers, to have them enjoy their camping experience the best way possible. All of our goals are always to be the No. 1 selling fifth wheeler. But the way you do that is...we just want customers to enjoy their camping experience when they're inside of a Montana or whatever brand we're selling.

"And so, I think that's what we kind of hang our hat on. We want to constantly bring new things to customers that they get really excited about." RVP



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The Cornerstone of COLONIAL AIRSTREAM

New Jersey's sole Airstream dealership banks on its loyal staff, brand relationships and nationwide online presence.

BY JOHN MCCURRY



PHOTOS COURTESY OF COLONIAL AIRSTREAM AND RV

Millstone, New Jersey-based Colonial Airstream and RV may be one of the most celebrated RV dealerships in the United States.

The family-owned firm has been a consistent winner of Airstream's Top Dealer Award since it became an Airstream dealer in 2002. Colonial has also been a regular recipient of Airstream's Five Rivets Award, and the dealership has received accolades from industry publications throughout the years.

Co-owner Jim Lenzo is quick to assign credit for Colonial's impressive recognitions.

"The awards we have received really comes down to our staff," he says. "Our staff is monumental in what makes us stand apart. I don't mean to sound cocky, but I'm very proud of them. When the consumer comes through the door, or when we are dealing with a manufacturer, or anyone in between, everyone is open to working together toward one common goal, and that is taking care of the customer."

RV PRO recently spoke with Lenzo and his son, Nick, who serves as the dealership's chief operating officer.

The elder Lenzo, Nick's brother and partner John, started out in the auto sales business and segued into selling RVs 22 years ago. They began as an Airstream dealer, and added Winnebago after Airstream exited the Class A space in 2005. Colonial is New Jersey's only Airstream dealer.

"My brother and I took the brands we wanted to represent into consideration," Jim Lenzo says. "We were looking for something that would last, and we picked two very iconic brands. It's treated us very well."

Colonial sells Airstream towables and coaches, but only motorized Winnebagos.

"So, we have Class A and Class B, and we even have the AE line of Winnebago, meaning the accessibility enhanced line for specific customers who have that need," Nick Lenzo explains. "We chose not to go with Winnebago towables, because we have had such success with the Airstream towable."

THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

Jim Lenzo says sales have settled back to what he terms as "normal" times after a few years of surging sales tied to the pandemic recovery. Colonial averages selling around 700 units per year.

"The past three years, everything that we traditionally knew got thrown out the window. Now, people are coming in again. Even with market changes, the demand is there. Year over year, from 2022 to 2023, we are still pacing just slightly ahead of last year, so the numbers are looking good. The number of units and the traffic is good, and will continue into the rest of 2023," he says.

Colonial's staff includes delivery coordinators, who teach customers how everything works on their RV on the day they pick up their unit. One of the coordinators takes a photo of the license plates, providing Colonial a barometer of its broad geographical reach.

"We've seen people come from as far as Alaska and even Hawaii, people who come to tour the continental U.S. before shipping their Airstream home," Nick Lenzo says. "We see plates from down in Florida, west to California and everywhere in between. I think that ties into one of the reasons for our success, which is our strong web presence. We do a lot online promotion via YouTube video. A lot of people call in to speak to one of our salesmen, Patrick, because they saw him on YouTube. It's a nationwide platform and people call from all over. They feel as if they know us."

Jim Lenzo credits word-of-mouth for Colonial's prolonged sales success. He says repeat and referral business have made the dealership what it is today.

"We are selling to people who are travelers," he says. "They are all over the place, and while they travel, they meet people, converse, make friends. Our customers are stewards of not only our brands, but of our specific company. I could never afford to support that level of advertising."

Colonial boasts an experienced staff of 56, with many having 10 to 20-plus years with the dealership. Turnover is low, and the company tries to promote from within. The Lenzos give credit to their staff for Colonial's success.

When Colonial opened its new 50,000-square-foot facility in early 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it moved away from exhibiting at consumer RV shows in favor of doing it in-house.

"We built this beautiful facility that we are really proud of and started having our own RV shows," Nick Lenzo says. "With COVID having shut down most RV shows, they didn't happen for a few years. We started holding sales events here, and it became clear very quickly that it gave us the opportunity to not only showcase the products, but also to showcase who we are and what kind of facility we have. This helped put us in a good light. It created a personal connection with our customers, and we are going to continue with that, doing in-house RV shows from time to time."

The Lenzos say having the in-house RV shows at the dealership has brought the community together. These events include having aftermarket vendors display their products.



Colonial Airstream and RV owners Jim Lenzo (left), John Lenzo and Nick Lenzo (right)

FINDING THE DIFFERENTIATOR

The dealership's new facility sits on more than 12 acres, just 3 miles from the New Jersey Turnpike. The showroom can house 10 to 12 RVs. There are 20 service bays staffed by 16 technicians.

"We are excited to be here," Nick Lenzo says. "It makes us feel good when customers walk in and say, 'Wow, this place is amazing.' We put a lot of time and effort into creating a floorplan that works for us, so the positive feedback means a lot."

Nick Lenzo maintains that one of Colonial's primary differentiators is the expertise of its sales operation. He says the sales staff's product knowledge keeps customers engaged.

"We have two sales departments, one for each of our brands," he says. "We found pretty quickly that customers were commenting on the impressive level of product knowledge of our staff. We feel that training on one brand keeps the



information from becoming diluted. This product specific idea has cascaded into our service area. We have technicians who are factory trained with Airstream and technicians who are factory trained with Winnebago. They are able to pinpoint and rectify issues very quickly."

Colonial stays involved with customers following sales, offering instructional videos and how-to advice.

"We found by giving walk-throughs and teaching people about our products helps to sell them," Nick Lenzo says, "but we also try to continue to be engaged. Our creative marketing director is doing a great job interacting with customers."

The younger Lenzo has worked in all of the departments at Colonial, most recently being promoted from sales. He enjoys the excitement of selling RVs.

"You are not really selling a product; you are selling a lifestyle. I just received a picture from a customer and his wife, sitting in their Airstream eating a lobster roll in Acadia National Park, drinking champagne and having the time of their lives. It's great to see."

The Lenzos are members of dealer councils for both Airstream and Winnebago. That gives Colonial a voice in the future of both brands.

"Being involved in these conversations is an excellent opportunity for us to share not only our customers' feelings about the products, but what they would like to see in the future," Jim Lenzo says. "We get to be the sounding board. It's nice to have input."

He says that future may one day include electric RV vehicles, but it will be a few years down the road.

"Beyond that, Airstream and Winnebago adapt very well to the market and to what is happening," he says. "They see where they need to go, and they really listen to what the consumer is looking for. They are two of the best companies that we could possibly be joined with for the ride into the future." RVP



Above: The dealership's Service Mechanic Joe Welches on the job.



In addition to Airstream, the dealership carries Winnebago's accessibility enhanced (AE) line of motorized units.

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IS LEAD DEAD?

Lead-acid versus lithium-ion batteries for RVing.

BY REMY LUNCEFORD, DRAGONFLY ENERGY

The world of deep-cycle batteries is complex, with several different types of batteries available. Two of the most popular deep-cycle batteries are lead-acid and lithium batteries. These batteries have different properties that make them suitable for various industries, including marine, mobile applications and recreational vehicles, especially motorized and towable RVs.

Across these applications, what are the advantages and disadvantages of these two deep-cycle battery types? Let's discuss lithium-ion versus lead-acid batteries.

THE HISTORY OF BATTERIES IN THE RV INDUSTRY

Lead-acid batteries were traditionally the go-to choice for RV manufacturers as they have been common, accessible and familiar. However, over the past decade, the choice has started to shift. Lithium batteries have become increasingly popular due to their extended life span and improved performance, giving customers more power and no battery anxiety.

Lithium batteries' popularity continues to grow, and as RV customers demand more from their batteries, manufacturers are shifting away from standard lead-acid batteries. Let's take a closer look at the reasons why.

LEAD-ACID BATTERIES – THE BASICS

Lead-acid batteries have been around since the mid-19th century and are one of the oldest rechargeable batteries still in use and prevalent today. They have remained steadfast in our modern society because they are easy and inexpensive to manufacture and have mature and easy-to-understand technology backing them.

While lead-acid batteries are relatively inexpensive and the technology is understood, they have shortcomings.



THE DOWNSIDE OF LEAD-ACID

One of the biggest requirements for lead-acid batteries, when used in RVs, is that they must be placed in vented areas or battery boxes. When lead-acid batteries are being charged, they release combustible hydrogen gas. This is different from lithium batteries, which do not off-gas, making them more adaptable to different spaces in RVs.

Besides the toxic off-gassing of lead-acid batteries, they are also destructive to the environment. Lead is a toxic substance, and when lead-acid batteries are not properly disposed of, lead can leach into soil and the water supply, causing serious harm to the environment. Over 95% of lead batteries are recycled; however, the 5% that are not contribute to metric tons of lead acid that is dumped into the environment and potentially cause long-term health problems.



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Lead-acid batteries are also heavier, have lower energy density than lithium and require specific charging and discharging, shortening the life span significantly when not done correctly.

Along with lead-acid batteries' temperamental charging qualities, they hold significantly less charge for their size than their lithium counterparts. This impacts people when they are on the road – who has time to pay close attention to specific rules for charging, or worrying if you even have enough charge, while traveling?

THE BASICS OF LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES

Lithium batteries differ from lead-acid batteries in several ways. First off, their chemical composition is vastly different from several types of lithium batteries, including lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO4), lithium nickel manganese cobalt oxide (NMC), lithium cobalt oxide (LCO), lithium manganese oxide (LMO), and lithium nickel cobalt aluminum oxide (NCA).

It's important to note the type of lithium battery as not all are created equal. The lithium battery used in your phone or computer is stereotypically different from those used in your RV.

THE BEAUTY OF LIFEPO4

LiFePO4 batteries are the cream of the crop regarding lithium battery options. They generate little heat compared to cobalt-based batteries and use lithium iron phosphate chemistry that offers superior chemical and mechanical compositions, no release of excess heat and structural stability.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A BATTERY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

It's important to note that not all lithium-ion batteries have a built-in battery management system (BMS). However, they are critical safety nets that increase the life span of your battery. A crucial component of a BMS in lithium-ion batteries is that it serves multiple functions to ensure the battery's optimal performance and longevity, essentially an insurance policy for the cells of your battery.

A BMS can track and protect against high and low temperature, identify short circuits and activate a shut down, employ a passive balancing at the top of the charge cycle and monitor high and low voltage. In unsafe conditions, the BMS will activate protective measures and shut down the battery to protect your investment and, most importantly, you.

LIGHTER WEIGHT, LESS BULK, MORE SPACE

Lithium is one of the lightest elements, meaning lithium batteries comprise less dense materials. This allows them to store much more energy for their weight ratio. The unique characteristics make lithium deep-cycle batteries considerably lighter – up to 75% less than lead-acid batteries.

Because of their higher power output, fewer batteries are needed for the same amount of power, ultimately saving space – an important aspect of RV life, as we all know.

UNEXPECTED COST SAVINGS

One of the arguments against lithium batteries is upfront cost. If you're trying to cut costs, taking the cost of lead-acid versus lithium at face value would seem like the obvious choice. However, lithium-ion is the more cost-effective option in the long run.

Lead-acid batteries need to be replaced fairly often, so that upfront cost gets multiplied. A study by Mortons on the Move on the cost savings of lithium versus lead-acid batteries found that lithium batteries are two to six times less expensive over their life span. In simple terms, lead-acid batteries need to be replaced every couple of years, whereas lithium can last upwards of 10 to 15 years.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Choosing between lead-acid and lithium batteries largely comes down to your application. There are many applications for which lead acid is still ideal – such as cranking batteries, like what you use in your car. However, most RV manufacturers are moving toward lithium-ion batteries. Lithium batteries allow RVers to live on the road just as they would at home. You no longer have to pick and choose what you want to power – lithium-ion batteries allow you to choose it all. RVP

Remy Lunceford is the SEO copywriter for Dragonfly Energy. Dragonfly Energy is a leader in green energy storage, currently manufacturing safe, reliable, and powerful LiFePO4 batteries to harness the unlimited potential of renewable energy across industries, while also advancing the future of solid-state battery technology through unique patented manufacturing processes forged by robust research and development. For more information, visit dragonflyenergy.com.



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How to Prep Customers for Boondocking

Power solutions while off-grid are a big concern for many campers. Here's how dealers can help get them ready.

BY JENNIFER KING

We hear it everywhere we go: more and more campers are looking to camp off the grid to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. A 2021 survey by Togo RV found that 26% of the respondents boondock between 10 and 20 nights per year – and it's highly likely that number has grown since then.

RV PRO asked several power solutions companies what dealers need to know to get their customers set up properly for off-grid camping. Here's what they had to say.

WHAT DO DEALERS NEED TO KNOW WHEN HELPING SET UP THEIR CUSTOMERS TO GO BOONDOCKING OR CAMPING OFF-GRID?

Webasto: When adventuring off-grid, being self-sufficient is not only important for comfort, but can also be critical to safety. Webasto fuel-operated heaters are the safest and most efficient way to keep off-grid campers warm and comfortable in cold weather. Sourcing the fuel already on board allows customers to be adventure ready in cold weather 100% of the time.

RELiON: When campers are on the road, they need to have a reliable power system. This will keep the lights on and the fridge running even when they're set up in the most remote areas. They don't want to get bogged down by needing to plug into an external energy system every night – having their own on-site, off-grid power can enable them to be completely self-sufficient for months or years at a time. Help your customers understand the benefits of investing in a top-notch lithium solar-plus storage system so that their boondocking, dry camping or other long-term RV adventures never lose charge, no matter where they are in the world. A solar system will power them through sunny days, and battery storage ensures that the system will still be operational when it's overcast as well. The last thing they want to be thinking about while on the road is whether they will have enough energy to last through each day.

Choosing high-quality battery solutions can pay dividends in the long term. Lithium iron phosphate batteries (LFP or LiFePo4) offer longer warranties, lower maintenance, greater safety – particularly in small, compact spaces – and higher efficiency compared to any other batteries on the market. RELiON's lithium batteries are ideal for those looking to build, or upgrade to, a reliable and long-lasting energy system to pair with a solar array. RELiON's portfolio of batteries is unmatched, including its Low Temperature line, which is perfect for those RVers looking to visit colder climates.

Intellitec: Dead batteries can be a major problem. There are aftermarket solutions that prevent the vehicle's battery from dying without the user needing to worry about if they

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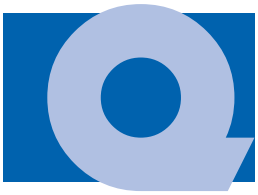
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disconnected loads from their battery. Intellitec offers a line of automatic battery disconnects, the Battery Guard, that senses when voltage is low and automatically disconnects the loads from the battery, keeping the chassis battery with enough voltage to start the vehicle, preventing the user from being stranded.

Yoshino: When boondocking or camping off-grid, customers should plan in advance how long they will be off-grid and what their power needs may be during this time. There are obviously a variety of factors that will get added to the mix in determining their power requirements. A weekend spent off-grid in hot weather may mean they want to use the air conditioner, which is always a heavy power draw. Will there be enough sunlight to take advantage of solar panels and recharging? How many devices and appliances do they intend to use over their time off-grid? All these factors need to be accounted for in determining the size of a portable power station and any solar panel setup that may be used.

Schumacher: To set up customers for success, dealers need to know what boondocking is and how it is different from regular RV traveling and camping. Boondocking is a form of self-sufficient, dispersed camping where RV owners camp on public land that is outside of a designated campground, so there is no access to water, sewer or electrical hookups. Dealers must be aware of these conditions and be able to suggest products that make camping easier but don't require electricity or water hookups. The products should have batteries with long life spans or alternative methods of charging (e.g., solar) that allow them to last for long periods without power and/or needing to be charged.

Micro-Air: EasyStart, the RV soft starter, makes starting on solar arrays and inverters/batteries possible, same for smaller generators. So, heading out to boondock, whether on the beach in San Diego or on Bureau of Land Management lands or in a Walmart lot (for example), you can add an EasyStart to your AC unit and – utilizing a smaller, quieter, lighter and less gas guzzling 2200 W generator (Hondas and Yamahas work the best, in our experience, with larger specs for their motors), an RVer can camp with ease while remote from the world. As generator manufacturers change designs over time, so too do their overall motor sizes change. To those modifications you can ascribe differences in the total load that can be handled by the gennie. In making a choice of generator for your RV, both the pros and consumers might benefit from review of generator specifications pages as well as reviews and RV forums.



WHAT CHALLENGES DO OFF-GRID CAMPERS FACE THAT DEALERS NEED TO BE AWARE OF?

Webasto: Condensation from moisture buildup in a vehicle can lead to mold, rot and rust, which is a nightmare for vehicle-based exploration. Some propane systems introduce moisture into the air, contributing to the condensation challenges. Choosing the right heat source can significantly reduce condensation. Fuel-operated heaters (diesel and gasoline) are externally ventilated and produce a comfortable dry heat. Also, utilizing the fuel in the vehicle's tank eliminates having to find propane.

RELiON: The most critical challenge when off the grid is power supply. To ensure they're prepared, the first thing off-grid campers need to do is determine their energy needs and purchase equipment accordingly. Two additional key factors include learning how to manage holding tanks and conserving water. There are a variety of ways to cut down on energy use when on the road – close the blinds to keep heat out, use fans instead of air conditioning, and make sure all your windows and doors are well sealed. Additionally, converting all lightbulbs to LED and purchasing more efficient options when outfitting an RV with appliances, like fridges and coffee makers, will go a long way in cutting down energy use. Utilizing more energy efficient appliances can also serve to reduce the size of the solar array and energy storage system that is needed.

Intellitec: People can be forgetful. The standard, cheap battery disconnect switch is often hidden in a compartment and forgotten, especially when the camper finally reaches their destination and is eager to enjoy the outdoors.

Schumacher: Off-grid campers can face a variety of challenges and issues that dealers must be aware of when suggesting related products, RVs and accessories. Off-grid camping often involves rough terrain and lack of access to basic resources like electricity, water and bathrooms. At nighttime, with no campground lights or lamp posts, the dark can obscure natural and artificial hazards that could cause damage to your vehicle. Also, with most boondocking occurring in dispersed camping areas that are off the beaten path, there is a possibility of rough terrain, tree branches and other nature-related surprises that potentially require specific equipment or heavy-duty rigs to navigate. It's important to understand that off-grid camping is different from traditional camping, making it crucial to be prepared for unseen challenges.

Micro-Air: Most people are unaware that as elevation rises, fossil-fueled (principally gasoline and propane) generators diminish in power thanks to lesser oxygen availability. If you are old enough to remember, U.S. runners trained for the 1968 Mexico City Summer Olympics by moving to Colorado where they could grow accustomed to running in thinner air at higher altitude. Every gas-powered motor at elevation loses strength at the rate of 3.5% every 1,000 feet. So, at just 3,000 to 4,000 feet, you've lost over 10% of the power in a generator. That could be the swing difference between starting [the] AC or sweating! With an EasyStart and a well-sized generator, starting and running AC is possible off grid. Our article "Selecting a Generator" is particularly helpful in sizing a generator to use with an EasyStart in the circuit of an RV AC unit. It includes calculations relating to elevation.


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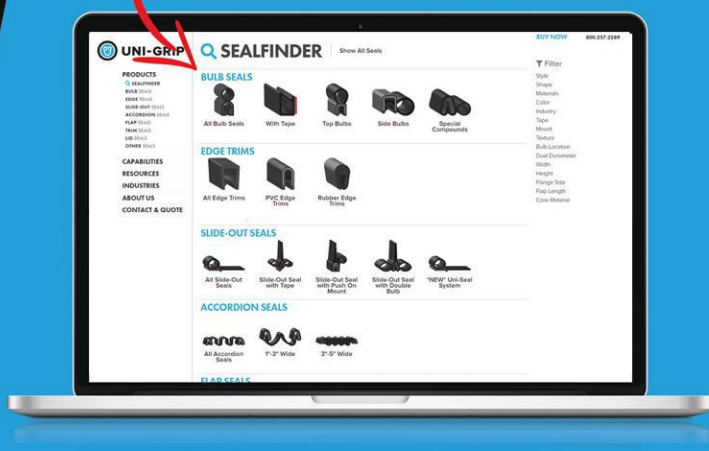


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Dealers can also supply customers information about the "jetting" of carburetors for better performance at altitude (they offer different sizes for different elevations). Desk agents should provide customers a cautionary tale about carburetor jet removal and how running on elevation jets after descending runs the risk of damaging the generator.

For fuel – plan to bring enough LPG or gasoline to last you the length of your trip depending on expected temperatures and the related run hours.

WHAT ARE THE MUST-HAVE PRODUCTS THAT A BOONDOCKER NEEDS ON-HAND TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL TRIP?

Webasto: Having reliable heat is important for comfort and safety when boondocking. Webasto fuel-operated heaters feature enhanced altitude capabilities and advanced controls, ensuring campers have what they need to thrive and worry less off-grid.

RELiON: Having solar-powered lighting and backup power at a campsite is one of the most efficient ways to make sure you have all your electronic amenities taken care of when you're off the grid.

Generators are loud, have fumes, and are high maintenance with low efficiency. Having a lithium solar power system for your RV or campsite provides a clean, renewable energy source. No matter what camping setup is used, whether portable solar panels or complete solar systems with batteries, they both offer a great power solution. Solar for camping has become increasingly popular with advances in lightweight folding solar blankets and portable solar options that allow users to easily get 12-volt power in any location. Getting the right solar setup for camping means you can use any household appliance that plugs into a normal power point like coffee machines, camping stoves and outdoor lighting.

When using RELiON lithium batteries as part of a solar energy system, you know you're making the absolute most of it. Three RELiON RB100 lithium batteries for an RV would crank out a total of 3,840 Wh of energy storage and can power energy needs for days at a time for those long weekend adventures.

When off-grid, not only do you want to keep amenities charged for comfort but having essential items powered up is important for safety purposes. A portable, solar power station is eco-friendly and ensures you won't risk depleting your vehicle's batteries. It allows you to operate the essentials like cellphones, appliances and grills, to charging everyday household gadgets.

Intellitec: Intellitec offers the Battery Guard line of automatic battery disconnects that sense when the battery is getting low. The Battery Guard will automatically disconnect the battery

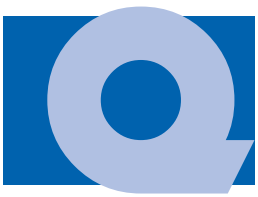


from the loads draining it, keeping the vehicle operable and the battery protected from damage.

Yoshino: Boondockers wishing to be free of gas generators need to have sufficient battery capacity to meet their needs during their time off-grid. This can be in the form of on-board batteries, portable power stations and also solar panels. Battery capacity and accompanying solar panels to recharge are the key elements to ensuring a successful trip.

Schumacher: Batteries and battery bank chargers are a must-have for charging any battery-operated devices such as flashlights, fans, lamps and any other devices that may require battery power. Having battery charger devices that hold their own charge and can quickly and efficiently charge other batteries or battery-operated devices can save time and prevent further issues. Having a portable, high-power generator is crucial for running power-hog electronics like microwaves and air conditioners and can power up features of the RV, like AC, when needed. Generators also can keep the aforementioned battery banks charged and power other electronics and devices, when necessary. Bringing high-powered LED lights for nighttime is essential for having bright, consistent light sources when campers are in the middle of nowhere. LED lights use less energy and are brighter than traditional lights, so having battery-operated or rechargeable LED lights, lamps and ground posts are essential for lighting up the night for long periods of time. With either generators, battery chargers or LED lights or flashlights, products that have a solar-charging or recharging component are essential to have as an emergency backup. Products, like battery chargers and lights, that can utilize solar power when it's sunny to recharge can extend the life of battery chargers and generators past their normal power limit. Even a battery charging bank that is used to charge other devices may eventually run out of charge itself and could leave a camper without access to devices, but the advent of solar recharging can keep your chargers and lights running when battery power is low. If someone is off the grid when their RV or vehicle's battery dies or will not start, having a powerful, easy-to-use, portable jump-starter is crucial. Having a product that is small, user-friendly and keeps its charge while also being able to jump-start a vehicle multiple times is an important safety precaution and a must-have item when boondocking.

Micro-Air: From an AC power perspective, it would be a properly sized generator, a proper length of power cord to connect it to the RV, enough fuel for the camping trip, perhaps a jetting kit from the generator manufacturer and, of course, an EasyStart 364 – the award-winning soft starter for RVs.



WHAT ARE THE LATEST INNOVATIONS THAT YOUR COMPANY OFFERS TO MAKE GOING OFF-GRID EASIER FOR CAMPERS?

Webasto: The Webasto EVO 40 diesel heater is designed for reliable operation at elevations of up to 18,000 feet. Combined with the SmarTemp 3.0 Bluetooth controller, the EVO 40 RV heating system makes adventuring off-grid in cooler climates as easy as choosing your desired temperature and enjoying the view.

RELiON: We recently launched the RELiON Outlaw 1072s portable power station that puts natural power right at your fingertips. It's a 1,000-watt continuous 2,000-watt peak, 921-watt-hour portable power supply. It can be charged through AC wall charger, plugged into a vehicle's 12-volt port, or recharged from the sun by connecting a compatible solar panel. The Outlaw is powered by LiFePO4 cells capable of 3,500 lifetime cycles at 80% depth of discharge with proper care. Multiple output ports mean campers can plug almost any device into it. It features 4 AC, USB 2.0, USB-C, a 9V barrel jack, a 12V cigarette lighter car plug, and an EC5 30-amp DC port. It also features an LCD screen that displays watts in/out and remaining runtime.

The Outlaw was designed to power the essentials anywhere. From personal electronics to TVs and refrigerators, it's strong enough to power what's needed, when it's needed, and lightweight enough to take anywhere. Have power on hand without the noise and fumes of a gas generator.

Intellitec: Intellitec offers the SMART B.I.R.D. with Communications. This product bridges your battery banks together when a charging source such as a generator is present. When the charging source is removed or both battery banks are fully charged, the Smart B.I.R.D. will isolate the batteries. In the instance the chassis battery is too low to start the vehicle, the B.I.R.D. can provide auxiliary start power, allowing the user to get back on the road instead of stranded waiting for a jump-start.

PowerMax: At PowerMax Converters, we have worked with many RV dealers on putting together an off-grid package. The three main products to have would be the PowerMax Generator Series, the PowerMax Inverter series, and the PowerMax PM3 series Converters.

The biggest question we ask is what are you trying to run? This would allow us to put together the right system for every boondocker. Most of the AC appliances are big energy consumers outside of the AC. So, if you're trying to run two AC units, that's something we really need to know.

The biggest issues are battery life when you're running high-powered AC appliances of the inverters while draining the 12V batteries. With the PowerMax brand of electrical products, you can accomplish any type of boondocking experience you desire by just bundling a few of the products above.

Yoshino: Yoshino's solid-state portable power stations offer not only a safer battery solution, but also a lighter, more compact unit. This allows for easy portability and versatility when going off-grid. A lighter, portable power station means it can be easily

carried outside for use in charging devices, power appliances for cooking, electronics, etc.

Schumacher: Schumacher offers a wide variety of products that make off-grid camping easier, safer and more reliable. Our SP 1500 Solar Battery Charger and Maintainer has a water-resistant solar panel battery maintainer that uses amorphous solar technology to convert sunlight into power. It works in sunny and cloudy conditions and can deliver a 15-watt charge to any 12-volt vehicle, RV or truck. It does not require any outside electricity source, which is important when off-grid camping where there are no electric hookups available.

Schumacher's SJ1322 Rechargeable AGM jump-starter with air compressor and USB power stations also is essential. This device has 6-in-1 functionality that allows off-grid travelers to jump-start their RV or vehicle should the battery die, but also acts as a portable power station and power converter for powering and charging any electric devices that may be needed.

In addition to that, it has an air compressor, an inflater/deflater that can inflate tires or necessary items, an LED work light that can illuminate any situation, and USB power outlets so you can charge any electronic devices, like phones and tablets that use USB. It's perfect for off-grid camping in general but can also come in handy for emergency situations or when unexpected challenges occur.

All of Schumacher's new rugged lithium jump-starters and lithium portable power packs are important to have on hand during an off-grid trip. For example, the SL1654 2250A wireless portable power pack and jump-starter can jump-start an RV, boat or large vehicle up to 50 times on one charge.

When there are no electrical hookups and your battery dies, having a powerful and compact jump-starter could prevent you from being stranded. The portable power pack also can charge and power multiple electronic and electric devices through two USB ports. Having charged devices is essential when boondocking or camping off-grid.

Micro-Air: With the EasyTouch RV, we offer a Wi-Fi RV thermostat that also has a large touchscreen not unlike your smartphone. A drop-in replacement for every single OEM digital thermostat on the market, it permits a boondocking camper away from the RV on a day trip or hike, to monitor temps in the RV and control them from their remote location.

By leaving behind the telephone of one of the campers to serve as a hotspot, the boondocker has EasyTouch RV thermostat control, (where available, satellite-based technologies and regular Wi-Fi work, too). The thermostat is great for pet safety as it enables both the monitoring of temperatures and a way to change the temperatures for the comfort of your fur babies and humans. Also, no subscription is required. RVP



LIPPERT'S LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP



How Jason Lippert implemented a culture shift at one of the RV industry's largest companies and encourages team members to lead with a servant's heart.

BY JENNIFER KING

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LIPPERT

Lippert participates each year in National Volunteer Week. This year, more than 3,000 team members joined in around the world.



Core Values

- Positive attitude
- Passionate about winning
- Honesty, integrity, candor
- Team play with trust
- Caring about people

Leader Qualities

- Effective communication
- Servant leader
- Courageous
- Humble/coachable
- Motivator

For Jason Lippert, president and CEO of Lippert, having a guiding light as the leader of a multi-billion-dollar company is fairly simple.

"For me, faith is first and foremost. My faith sets the foundation – the tone – for how I try to live and lead," Lippert says.

In addition to that foundation, the company shares five leader qualities and five core values that set expectations and guidance for all leaders at Lippert.

"Those five leader qualities and our five core values really drive what we expect good leadership to look like," he says.

Among those core values and leadership qualities is the idea of "servant leadership" – this term was used for the first time by Robert K. Greenleaf in a 1970 essay, according to Forbes, and is defined as a leader whose "main goal and responsibility is to provide service to their people…In servant leadership, the leader ensures that the followers are growing in all areas – their profession, knowledge, autonomy and even their health and physical development."

This is a responsibility Lippert takes to heart.

"The sad fact in the country is that 88% of working Americans feel like they work for a company that doesn't care about them," Lippert says. "At least that's what the surveys say. That tells you that most cultures are bad. For most companies we acquire, the leadership means well, there's just no real formal working culture or values. So what we do is go in and say, look, we've got our core values. If you're a leader, we've got leader qualities that you have to adhere to… we base our culture around those values and our expectation is that you live up to those things. We're going live up to them, we expect you to live up to them, and if you do, you can stay here and grow and develop."

Actively Listening

One of the leadership qualities that

Professional Development Leads to Personal Growth

When RV PRO spoke with Jason Lippert about his leadership style and company culture, it was clear that personal growth is a topic he is passionate about. Here's what Lippert had to say on the subject:

"One of our big purposes is to show people that business can be a force for good. When people say, 'What do you mean by that? That sounds kind of cheesy.' There are two things that I can point to business truly being a force for good. One, when we pour into our teammates and help them grow and develop as human beings, one of the things that happens is that all of a sudden they start leading themselves better – they become a better teammate, their life gets a little better.

"When they start working on that stuff, they don't just forget about that stuff when they walk out the door and go home. Because they're living that way for 50 hours a week at work, you can't turn on and off that switch. Once you truly start working on that stuff and you take it a step further, you develop a personal and professional growth plan.

"These are my professional objectives, these are my personal objectives, these are my objectives for my team, these are my objectives for my family. All of a sudden, you start working on that stuff and now you become a better dad, you become a better spouse, you become a better mom. You become a better leader at home, and if you haven't noticed, that's what the world needs right now.

"We need better leadership and values at home for kids that are growing up these days. It gets harder and harder for kids to grow up the right way. But values is what's missing. And good leadership at home is what's missing. And we can teach that at work. We can teach good leadership at work."

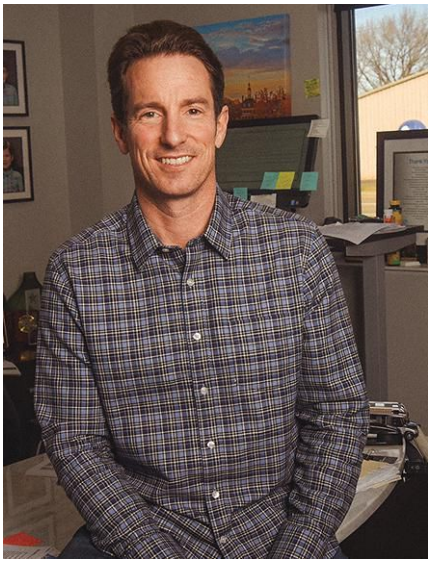
Leadership Book Recommendations

Besides the "Daily Hope" podcast that Jason Lippert listens to daily, Lippert also recommends reading:

"Everybody Matters: The Extraordinary Power of Caring for Your People Like Family" by Bob Chapman

"The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here for?" by Rick Warren

"Lead Like Jesus: Lessons From the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time" by Ken Blanchard



Lippert prides itself on as a company is good communication. The president and CEO says part of good communication is listening.

Researchers estimate people only remember 25% to 50% of what we hear, according to a Forbes article. "Active listening makes you influential because you are leaning into the person and trying to understand, build trust and empathize before developing solutions and recommendations," Forbes says.

Lippert puts this into practice often.

"I go to a plant once a week and sit in front of our frontline leaders… just taking time to cast a little bit of vision and answer questions about the company. We're obviously on a culture journey, so they ask a lot of questions about what's next and what are we really trying to accomplish? We share growth and development plans, go around the room and talk about what we're all working on, not only as leaders but as human beings – how we're trying to get better."

Being intentional about making sure leaders carve out time to engage team members at a different level than they've ever been engaged with is an important goal, Lippert says.

"Tell me what's not going well. Tell me what we can change. Tell me how we can be better. And then if we listen and capture a few of those things and actually act on those things, then that translates into the team members saying 'they really do care. They listen to my ideas.'

"When you do that kind of stuff, it's not the typical experience people get at companies. So they say, 'I've worked at a lot of companies – I've never been treated this way. I've never felt the values before. I've never been listened to before. They've never taken any of my ideas, let alone wanted any of my ideas. I'm going to stay at this company because they do all those things.'"

Finding the right team members who buy in to the company's core values and want to grow as high-quality leaders is of ultimate importance. Empowering people to make decisions and holding them accountable to those core values is a part of the equation, too.

"A lot of businesses have core values," Lippert says. "The problem is they just don't enforce it or they don't hold people accountable. The leaders are first and foremost – they're held to the core values. Because if they're not following the core values, it's highly likely their people won't follow the core values.

"So, holding leadership accountable to our core values and our leader qualities are the most important thing. And then it's making sure we're getting team members in that are reporting into those leaders that are inspired by the values, or they're aligned to the values and they're willing to follow suit and live out the values at work every day."

Lippert explains that if team members aspire to be a leader, they have a clear picture of what the company says a good leader does.

"Most people get promoted to leadership because they're generally good people. They show up to work every day. They've got a hard work ethic, they care about people. But at the end of the day, none of those things really qualify you to be a leader. So, what does leadership look like? It's these five things – you've got to be working on these five things."

Finding Direction as a Leader

There's a reason why many books and articles exist on the daily habits of leaders. Most people have heard of "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen R. Covey, which has appeared on numerous best-seller lists.

Lippert says he starts each day with prayer time and listening to "Daily Hope," a podcast by Rick Warren, a pastor who wrote the popular book "The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here for?"

"It's a 15-minute podcast every morning. And then I sit in the Bible for 15 minutes. I have a routine to keep me grounded. That's how I lead myself, ultimately."

Another habit Lippert believes in is writing down your goals.

"What we say around here is if people are growing personally and professionally, they actually have a written plan. From our frontline team members who are making parts – the requirement is you have a written growth and development plan."

Lippert has created a culture and leadership department with Adam Kronk as chief culture and leadership development officer and a team of 29 people.

"I've never had anybody tell me that a company with no written personal and professional growth plan would be better than a company that has everybody working on their own personal and professional growth journey," Lippert says.

"We try to encourage people into it. We don't say, 'look, this is the rule.' We say, 'this is going to be better for your life and it'll make life better for you here. You'll be happier with yourself and ultimately, it'll help your family better.

"We encourage people to do it and eventually they get hungry for it because they start learning how to grow and develop as a human being."

The Culture Shift

In a 2019 Glassdoor survey of 5,000 people from the United States, United Kingdom, France and Germany, 77% of respondents said they consider a company's culture before applying for a job. According to Forbes, "Companies

with a robust culture have up to a 72% higher employee engagement than those whose culture are misaligned or need improvement."

It was 11 years ago when the culture improvement efforts began at Lippert.

"Culture is a journey that never ends. So there's always something to work on. There's always an area [that could] be better," Lippert says. "We're literally working on new things all the time."

Prior to the shift as a company, Lippert says the RV business was more cutthroat.

"It was just win at all cost. We'd run over people to just win business and do whatever it took to win more customers and grow," he says.

"For me, my personal life was a little bit of a disaster and I was doing a lot of praying at the time and asked God to help me with my life."

Instead of focusing just on acquiring more businesses and increasing stock prices and profits, Lippert says he was looking also at what his purpose was.

"The answer was like, hey, you've got thousands of people that [you] are responsible for, their family members," he says. "Ultimately, what are we going to do with that? The culture journey became 'how do we steward our people in life?' If they stay here longer, the business gets stronger versus people coming and going all the time.

"One of our benefits of that was that, over time, over the last 10 years, our attrition has gone from 125% down to below 30%," Lippert says. "When people stay at the business longer, the business just gets better. Nobody argues that."

Showing that the company cares and means what they say makes their team members want to stick around, Lippert says.

"They leave because the culture's bad or the leadership is bad. They don't want to get beat down for 40 hours a week their entire life – they get sick of it and they leave.

"So, when you treat them well, the opposite happens and all of a sudden you get this great momentum in the business. That translates into efficiency, quality, safety, innovation, and those are all things that make a business run really, really well."

How to Make the Shift

When deciding to implement a culture change, one thing the company focused on was how they use their words, Lippert says. "We kind of decided that words matter. So, we stopped using words like boss and supervisor and manager – employees, even. Employees is kind of sterile. It doesn't really inspire you as part of a company to be better," Lippert says. "Nobody likes to be bossed or managed or supervised. So we just stopped using words that had negative implications. We call people family around here – we say team members and it's just the way we talk to people. I think it is a little bit different and we're very intentional and conscious about it."

Another element is putting into action what the company says it's going to do – Lippert says the company's core values are not just lip-service.

"We have to hold people accountable, and that means sometimes that people have to leave because they just don't want to change," he says. "Change is hard. Change is uncomfortable. But what we've found is that, over time, people don't want to come to work and be miserable. They don't want to come to work and see bad values. They don't want to come to work and be led in a really bad way by a bad leader.

"They want the opposite of those things. So values is a system that helps keep all that in check. What we've found, bringing people on, there's always a little bit of skepticism – maybe even a little sarcasm: 'I've been at companies that talk about that and they don't do it.' But we say, don't throw stones. Follow us, and as long as we do what we say we're going do, come along. If we step out of line, raise your hand and hold us accountable. We're going to do the right things. We're going to do them consistently…It doesn't take long for people to realize, oh, 'I've been watching them – they're doing what they say they're doing.'" RVP



MAKING PEOPLE THE CENTER OF YOUR UNIVERSE

How Storyteller Overland's chief people officer leads efforts that orbit around the company's mission and vision.

BY JENNIFER KING

Not only does Storyteller Overland build out-of-this-world adventure vehicles, but it's also a company that takes pride in its work culture.

As the company states in its open job postings: "We are proud to have a values-based culture, which means we focus less on rules and transacting and more on values and transforming. Our goal is to create workplaces and spaces where great people can do great things in order to thrive and flourish both professionally and personally."

One person helping to guide the Storyteller Overland ship through this universe is Christina Linton, the company's chief people officer. Here, learn more about her role and Storyteller's mission.

You were recruited to be the chief people officer about a year ago. What does that title mean?

Linton: I don't know that it was a title that the company ever had on the radar, at least not so early in the company's history. But [their recruiter] understood the culture, and she helped the key leadership team understand how important it was to have a position like this in place early – take all the great ingredients that were already there, enhance those things and then build upon them. And I definitely understood what my role would entail and the impact that it would have, since I was working essentially in that same capacity within another company that modeled what great culture looks like.

What are some things that you've put in place here and what do you foresee for the future?

Linton: We want to be a destination employer and recognized as a best place to work…and in order to do that, we have to build programs that support our people and their families. So, during our 2023 Galaxy open enrollment, we unveiled our Storyteller rewards program. Most companies refer to rewards as benefits. Our rewards program has both monetary and non-monetary components focusing on all the areas that impact a person: their health, their wealth, their work and their home. The goal of the program is to help team members and their families thrive in their work life and their home life. Because what happens at home impacts you at work and vice versa.

So, one of the things that we are working to create for the future is a



Storyteller Overland's Chief People Officer

Christina Linton has 18 years of experience spanning people and culture, sales and operations, compliance and HR operations. She has a bachelor's degree in liberal arts from Marshall University, a master's in business administration from American InterContinental University, and has completed doctoral work in organizational leadership at Nova Southeastern University. According to Storyteller Overland, "Christina has a track record of establishing strong community connections, fostering high employee satisfaction and engagement rates, and creating environments where great people can thrive and flourish."



(clockwise) Daniel Moody, Daniel Mojica, Shelly Frese, Summer Trammell

leadership development program. While we are not a traditional company as it pertains to job titles and org charts, we do understand that leadership is critical to maintaining a healthy workplace culture and continuing to crush our goals. By growing our leaders, they can in turn grow their team members which allows us to take a full circle approach to development at all levels of the company.

Tell me what some of your "unusual" awards are.

Linton: We have the core programs like medical, dental and vision. We also added standalone telehealth for all of our team members and their qualified dependents. We also have a nutrition program with a registered dietician. We partner with Cultivate Wellness, and they can help our team members have more of a proactive wellness approach to life.

How do you collect feedback from your employees?

Linton: Early on in my tenure, we launched an employee satisfaction survey because we needed to find out what we were doing well and where we had some opportunity, as I like to call it. So now we send out the employee engagement survey annually. It is a deep dive survey and covers a variety of areas – pay, rewards, workload, resources, leadership, etc. That's how we prioritized our needs early on. Then we do an employee net promoter score survey twice annually. This asks just two questions: Are you proud to work at Storyteller, and would you recommend a family or friend? It also allows the team members to share open feedback so we can keep a pulse on employee satisfaction and clues us in to issues that may have bubbled up.

How does the company get employees to buy in to its vision?

Linton: Well, that's actually pretty easy to do because we show our team members that we care about them through our actions. There is this old saying, 'They don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.' And that really starts at the top with our CEO Jeffrey [Hunter]'s heart and vision. He's obviously brilliant but also really has a heart for people. His approach to leadership and enterprise management has resulted in the culture that we all get to experience today.

So, how do you transfer that information in a meaningful way so that people can internalize those things then live that out daily and "buy-in" to the value system? We have to be willing to talk about it, be good coaches, teach people, be patient and model the behaviors. And sometimes that means having the not so fun conversations. We also have our values in our Galaxy Guide, which is our form of an employee handbook – our North Star if you will. We make sure that all of our policies, standards and procedures, and I hate to say rules, but we do have rules as a legal entity, embody those values as well. So basically, we rally around the culture and the vision by allowing the values to serve as our guideposts which in turn builds trust and organically creates buy-in.

What words would you use to describe Storyteller Overland?
Daniel Moody, Parts Quality Manager
I would say challenging and rewarding. I'm pushed to go the extra mile. We have developed something that's quite frankly awesome. And wanting to keep that up and maintain it, it's definitely a challenge for me because I've moved to heights that I haven't been to before. But it's also very rewarding to see where I've come from and where I'm at now. And it's the same with the company; when I got here, we were making six vans a week. Now we're doing that many a day.

What makes Storyteller a great place to work?
Summer Trammell, Chief of Staff
What Storyteller does well is find the gifts in people. Because you don't have to change who you are when you come [here]. You can take time to figure out what your gifts are and then somehow figure out a way to amplify those in a position or in some sort of role or on a project. And I think that's what people really love, too - you show up how the world made you, and I think that's what makes Storyteller really special.

When a new employee arrives or you're training someone new, what do you want them to know about the company?
Shelly Frese, Graphics Lead
Mainly heart, you know? When you care, you're going to do the best job that you can do, and [we] don't expect you to go fast, because speed comes with knowledge and ability. So, just learning the basics and we go from there and you'll get faster. And if you mess up, that's awesome because now we know how to fix that…both of the girls that are on my team, they're like, 'But I don't want to mess up.' And [I say], 'No, I need you to mess up.' Please don't be afraid. Ruin something really quick so we can just figure out how to not do that again. Move forward.

What makes Storyteller a great place to work?
Daniel Mojica, R&D Technician
Whenever you're learning how to do something, sometimes you might get a good idea…you can take it to your superiors and move up the line and say, 'Could this be a good idea? Could this be a new idea?' I was kind of scared to try it, but we did it anyway… everybody's input is kind of analyzed. Everyone has a voice.

Tell me about the Galaxy Guide.
Linton: We published the Galaxy Guide this year, which is our form of a handbook. It really sets the tone and standards for our teams and is illustrated in a very Storyteller way. The voice is not in a traditional handbook tone, it truly embodies who we are as a company. In the former employee manual, it was almost like we had two different cultures. We had this "stated on paper" culture and then a different experience culture. But what the Galaxy Guide did was make the culture real for new [employees] especially. I think that it outlines well what our standards and expectations are, which is really important because while we're fun and exciting, we also have standards of excellence and value propositions that we make and keep to our external community. It also gives everybody a really clear understanding of how they fit into the galaxy and what it means to be a galaxy member.

What is your hiring process like, and how do you measure performance?
Linton: We use a topgrading hiring methodology and at least three sets of eyes and ears. Interviewing is the greatest opportunity that we have to protect the culture that we have all built together. And different people see different things. This interview style allows us to learn about the candidate's full journey while uncovering patterns and trends of behavior. It really allows you to get to know the candidate and understand if they are a great fit for the role and the culture. Once we move through the topgrading process and gain consensus across the hiring committee, then we'll make you a competitive offer. I say competitive because being competitive in this area is very important to us. And once that offer is accepted, then we onboard you. Everything's digital so that way it's streamlined. We use BambooHR, which personally I love. It's a really fun introduction to the entire organization. But then we're looking for a first 30- to 90-day acclimation plan to be built from the leader because we want the new team member to understand what their first 90 days looks like. So, once [someone is] on board, there's a 90-day provisional period, a time of acclimation, learning, training. And I hate to say 'if you make it through that' because we have less than 5% turnover as it stands today, which is virtually unheard of. But after your provisional period, we would hope that we've set you up for success and you can fly free and we have a ton of autonomy here.

We just launched an annual feedback evaluation through Bamboo. It is easy to complete and straightforward. This way everybody has a true pulse on opportunities, how they're contributing, what value they're bringing to the team and what they could improve upon. We actually don't require the annual evaluation. Ideally, you're meeting with your team members at least weekly or monthly, and you have a good flow of feedback in both directions. But we have said, 'OK, leader, if your team member completes their self-evaluation in Bamboo, then we're asking you to complete that because that is them stating they want formal feedback.'

Storyteller Overland is based in Birmingham, Alabama – has the company struggled to find employees?
Linton: For our technicians, a lot of our manufacturing work [is] upfitting, so we're not building from scratch. Those are very trainable and coachable roles. But honestly, our reputation is so good, our culture is wonderful and our pay is competitive. We haven't struggled to fill open roles. I've continued to remind the leaders that we are a destination employer – do not ever make a hiring decision out of desperation. Or, if you don't think you have 100% of what you're looking for, keep [looking] because people want to be on our team. You have that luxury. That's a great place to be. RVP

FOR MORE of RV PRO's interview with Christina Linton, visit rv-pro.com.

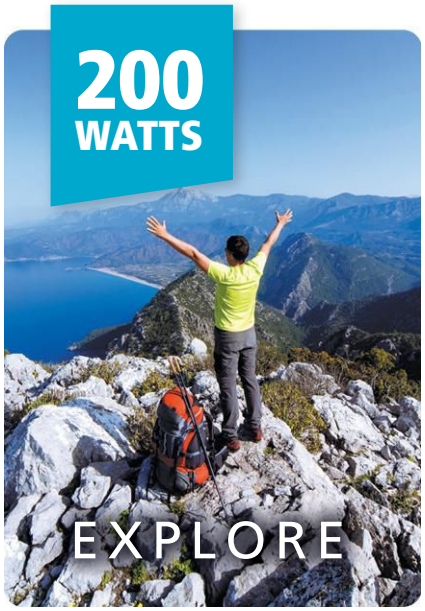
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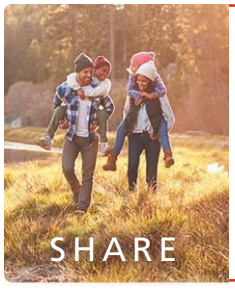






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RVWA GROWS LEADERSHIP AMONG WOMEN

The RV Women's Alliance connects women with mentors, develops a welcoming work atmosphere and creates opportunities for career development and growth to advance women's leadership potential.

BY RONNIE WENDT



Confident, resilient women have a place and can excel in the RV industry. But having mentors and role models, a welcoming work atmosphere and opportunities for career development and growth are key to their success, according to Susan Carpenter, president and chair of the RV Women's Alliance (RVWA).

The RV industry has made "significant strides in putting women into leadership roles," she says. "Many companies are actively changing their mindsets and making sure they bring more diversity to the table."

RVWA works to amplify the number of women in the industry and in leadership roles. This plays out in the organization's growth, which has swelled from 200 members in 2019 to 1,700 members, representing more than 500 companies, in 2023.

Carpenter attributes the association's membership boom to a switch from "finding more members to bringing new value to membership." Being able to meet in person again after perfecting virtual events during the pandemic also opened doors that caused its membership to swell.

"It's like the 'Field of Dreams.' If you build it, they will come," she says. "Our members are talking about the great things we are doing and it's attracting new members."



Denise Chariya

Three-Pronged Leadership Approach

RVWA focuses on three areas to deliver value to its members: mentorship,

education and networking.

"These three buckets are the framework for how we put together our programming," says Denise Chariya, RVWA president-elect and director of marketing at THOR Industries.

Mentoring, she says, maximizes women's opportunities in the industry. RVWA pairs mentors and mentees holding different positions across the industry in a one-year mentorship program.

"We've gotten great response from the people involved," she says. "Though the program lasts for one year, it's become obvious that people will continue these relationships after the mentorship ends."

Networking also becomes really important for women's success across the industry, she adds.

"We've identified a need for diverse types of networking opportunities. It cannot be just the typical happy hour networking," she says. "Those opportunities don't always work well for more introverted people."

RVWA has increased its focus on one-on-one networking and community service events, where members can volunteer and develop industry contacts at the same time. If a member participates in a Habit for Humanity event, for example, they meet industry professionals as they work side by side.

"Volunteering is networking," Chariya says. "It's networking without the pressure. You don't have to attend a cocktail party and mill around talking to strangers."

The association will hold its inaugural RVWA Camp Out in May. Currently, more than 100 members have signed up to attend the Elkhart, Indiana, event.

"The camp out will include service work with the Girl Scouts of America, networking opportunities and outdoor fun," she says.

Education is another way that helps build skills women need to advance their careers, Chariya adds.

"The pandemic taught us how to do virtual learning and meet the needs of members across the country," she says, mentioning an event that was held in April. "We [had] a workshop this month on DiSC profiling, where participants can take the DiSC assessment."

DiSC stands for the four main personality profiles described in the DiSC model: **(D)ominance, (i)nfluence, (S)teadiness and (C)onscientiousness.** The expert in charge of the workshop will give each person an overview of their personality traits and how it affects all aspects of their life.

In 2022, RVWA held its first symposium in Chicago. The association plans to host the event again Oct. 11-13 at The Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel in Chicago.

"Last year, we focused on leadership and partnered with Purdue University. This year, the focus will be on emotional intelligence and conflict resolution. We will also have a DiSC assessment opportunity and will look at managing across generations."



Susan Carpenter

When RVWA asked members how they wanted to see the symposium improve, the common thread in their responses was a cry for more networking.

"This year, we are bringing back the uncomfortable but fun lunch where you are assigned to a table with people you



don't know," Chariya says. "We are also going to do speed networking, patterned after the speed dating of the 1980s."

These exercises are designed to help women develop the confidence they need to lead, according to Chariya.

She adds, "We give confidence to women who might not otherwise have been able to break that glass ceiling. Women are perfectionists and think they have to be all that before they can go after a job. We give them the confidence they need to change that mindset."

Carpenter says that changing mindsets is why RVWA opened its membership to men as well. Today, men represent 10% of RVWA's members.

"It takes both men and women to change mindsets and make a change," she says. "Men can learn as much from women as women can learn from men."

How RVWA Leads on Leadership

Besides helping women grow into leadership roles in their careers, RVWA also gives women opportunities to lead within the association itself, according to Carpenter.

"We have one paid employee," she says. "The rest is run by volunteers. Members can volunteer in any of our programs. It's a fantastic way to network and hone your leadership skills. We have many programs where members can take a leading role."

The organization helps women hone the soft and hard skills they need to advance their careers. They can master these skills in workshops and other educational programs or through volunteer efforts within the organization. Both strategies are beneficial, they say.

"Whether you're on a task force for an RVWA program or participating in a program, you are exposed to different people and leadership styles," Chariya explains. "I came to the RV industry four years ago. It can be challenging – and a little intimidating – when you first enter this industry. RVWA does a wonderful job of creating moments and opportunities for you to feel comfortable and get to know people."

"IT TAKES BOTH MEN AND WOMEN TO CHANGE MINDSETS AND MAKE A CHANGE."

Chariya shares how RVWA helped her grow into progressively higher leadership roles. After sitting on the board for two years, she's now RVWA's president-elect.

"I will spend the next two years learning from Susan, so I'm ready to take on a greater leadership role," she says.

Carpenter adds she's looking forward to passing the baton to Chariya, as it's important for organizations to identify next-generation leaders and step aside to make room for them.

"It's healthy to have rotation," she says. "Because other people bring different ideas to the table. I am excited that RVWA is ready to start succession planning and leadership rotation. Denise brings a refreshing viewpoint and a lot of education to the role. I think she's going to knock it out of the park."

As more women assume leadership roles, it's vital to share their stories with others, adds Carpenter.

"Women need to see other women holding leadership positions," she says.

RVWA has partnered with media outlets and uses its social media for member spotlights.

"The association selects random members from the membership pool and interviews them, then shares their stories on social media and through media partners.

"The spotlights give them a chance to shine and lets others see how women are contributing to the betterment of the RV industry," Carpenter says. "And when we show women in leadership roles, it gives other women the confidence to go after these roles too."


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ASSOCIATION BUILDS LEADERS AMONG DEALERS



RVDA Board of Directors Chairmain Nathan Hart says time and energy given to the organization has come back to him tenfold.

BY DARIAN ARMER

Nathan Hart has spent nearly the last 30 years in the RV industry. He started his career while he was still in high school when his parents bought a campground in 1992. In 1996, he and his father started a dealership together in Newcastle, Indiana, and for the last 27 years, he's been working and advocating for the industry with no plans of slowing down.

In fact, he continues to take on more leadership roles; his latest role is as chairman of the board of directors of the RV Dealers Association (RVDA). But before becoming chairman, Hart spent years building a business and utilizing industry organizations and associations to help his dealership grow while continuing to give back.

Humble Beginnings

"A lot of customers started coming into our campground that weren't happy with the service they received on their RVs. Years before my father had owned a used car lot. We figured we would start a small RV dealership in front of our campground," Hart says. "It created a love for the industry through the campground with sales. I think we sold 40 that first year."

Hart's younger brother graduated high school and came in as a partner in the business in 1999, while his dad continued to work a full-time job, retiring from General Motors in 2002. Hart's father then worked in the campground/dealership before retiring from the family business in 2014. In 2015, Hart and some other partners bought Primeaux RV in Louisiana.

"My father was always just a natural-born salesperson. Sales attracted us to the industry. We could all sell pretty well. We were persuasive and enjoyed interacting with customers. It's fun to go in a dealership and look at RVs. I still get excited when I see a new product or layout, or new interiors," Hart says. "Owning a dealership spawned from liking sales then meeting manufacturers



in Indiana and forming some relationships pretty quickly."

The family business has evolved from a campground to larger and larger buildings, now with 66 acres in Indiana and 35 acres in the South, with plans to open a new store in Indiana pretty soon. Hart says his family still owns the 150-site campground, but aren't necessarily involved in the day-to-day operations, which is now handled by a family friend.

"The campground has been a big part of our success over the years. We give two nights free to people who purchase from us. Those who come in for service can stay at the campground. It's a really nice part of the business culture we have here," he says.

Taking It Back to 1998

Hart says relationships with manufacturers have been a huge part of building the dealership, most of them spawning from his involvement with the RVDA convention, which he started attending in 1998.

"I went to Minneapolis and quickly learned there's a lot more stuff I need to know to run a successful leadership," he says. "It gave me an opportunity to be in groups. I've been involved with the state association for a number of years. I don't really remember when we weren't. We're a part of a couple 20 Groups. We've been with Spader for 12 years now. Our Primeaux locations are in separate 20 Groups as well. We believe in that kind of network and training."

After his first convention in 1998, Hart began regularly attending RVDA conventions. He says he always walked away having learned something beneficial that he could put into place at his dealership, but what that was depended on where he was at in the cycle of his dealership.

"Early on it was about education for me. We had a new store and didn't understand a lot of things. I met a lot of people there, too, vendors and people we needed to create relationships with to figure out computer systems and banks early on," Hart says.

"Education is still important but at a higher level now. We have a CMO now so we don't need a marketing class, we don't need a finance class. It's good curriculum for GMs, parts people, salespeople, etc. It has changed from education to truly focusing on the network side of things now. You meet so many people and get introduced to so many people," he says.

"Some of those lifelong friendships are a result of events at RVDA. I would not want to be a part of an industry that doesn't have associations like we have. Obviously RVDA and RVIA [RV Industry Association] represent different sides of the business. But they work so well together to help our industry. Education is important. It's how you grow leaders. Associations keep us informed, keep us protected and advocate for us."

Building a Better Industry

Hart says he's not sure where the industry would be without the associations working together to advocate for the industry. For example, he says the RV Technical Institute (RVTI) would not work without the cooperation of both associations.

"RVTI has already had a huge impact on our industry and think it's only going to improve over the next few years as dealers embrace that we need to train and retain employees," Hart says. "RECT [repair event cycle time], which is an industry-wide focus, does not work without associations."

Hart was a delegate for RVDA for a number of years when people in his network asked him to join the RVDA board.

"I said, 'OK. But I don't want to be chairman,'" he laughs. "Then you get involved and really see the importance of the industry. Someone was the chairman when I went to my first industry event in 1998. The association has given a lot to me and my family.

"I'll be transparent. It is a lot of travel and time, but it's well worth all that. When do you ever do something really impactful that doesn't require dedication and focus? Never. A year is short and goes by fast. It's well worth the time commitment to continue to cultivate the next generation of leaders for RVDA. I stepped into a great position. If anybody is on the fence about joining the association it is something you will never forget and an opportunity that you'll get more out of it than you put in. I guarantee it."

Hart says dealers may take an isolationist view for their dealership but that ultimately when every RV dealer is doing better and the customer experience is improved across the industry, then every dealer is going to do better.

"If we have bad players out there who don't meet expectations, then we'll all struggle," he says.

"Our industry has matured. The manufacturers are more professional, dealerships are more professional, and when that happens, customers are going to be happier.

"We continue to push RVTI and RECT as an industry and association for others to take it seriously. We are focused on training our people. We have a curriculum that is very inexpensive and subsidized by the industry. There should be no excuse not to have qualified people working in your dealerships if we focus on RECT and RVTI."

"The customer experience continues to improve. We already know people love to be outside, and if we keep working to be better, we have a bright future, but we have to meet those expectations. It can be done. It takes a little time but if we keep working on it, we can get there."RVP

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THE RV INDUSTRY EMERGING LEADERS COALITION:

Making a Difference and Building Connections

BY RYAN ELIAS AND MEMBERS OF THE EMERGING LEADERS COALITION

The Emerging Leaders Coalition is an exciting way the RV Industry Association (RVIA) has begun cultivating the industry's next generation of leaders to preserve the unity that has helped drive our industry's success. This coalition brings together young professionals from various sectors of the RV industry, including manufacturers, dealers, suppliers and campgrounds, who share a passion for the industry and a desire to drive positive change. The coalition provides opportunities for networking, professional development and community engagement among emerging and current industry leaders.

The Emerging Leaders Coalition (ELC) is important to me and important to the wider industry because it is strengthening institutional industry collaboration, competency, engagement, inclusivity and innovation by identifying, recruiting, developing, engaging and retaining emerging industry leaders. We are also harnessing and elevating diverse emerging industry leader perspectives. Specifically, this means continuing the rich legacy of the RV industry that has been built over decades, and ensuring the future of the industry contains collaboration toward our common goals.



Ryan Elias, president and general manager at Triple E RV

One of the first initiatives of the coalition was the RV Leadership Conference, held this past March. On all accounts, the event was a resounding success, bringing together industry leaders, visionaries and professionals from all sectors of the RV industry. The conference featured insightful keynote speakers, panel discussions on important topics and informative workshops. Attendees had the opportunity to learn from industry experts, share ideas and network with like-minded peers, gaining valuable insights and inspiration to help shape the future of the RV industry.

One of the highlights of the RV Leadership Conference was how it highlighted not only the perspectives of current industry leaders, but also elevated the voices of the Emerging Leaders Coalition – all of whom are dynamic young professionals who are passionate about driving positive change and making a difference.

Going forward, members of the Emerging Leaders Coalition will be helping to tackle some of our biggest industry challenges, bringing fresh perspective and ambition to current issues facing the industry. This next generation of leaders is learning about all segments of the industry and developing significant personal relationships that will bind the industry together for generations to come. It is these personal relationships that have let our RV industry unity thrive and grow over the past 40 years, especially during challenging times. Together we are better, and this group is proving that.

- Ryan Elias, chair

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Trey Miller – Jayco vice president of marketing



How do you see the industry's current leadership landscape?
I feel like we are at a crossroads for all segments of the industry in regard to leadership. You are seeing the children of dealers stepping in to take over the organization, suppliers are embracing younger leaders who bring a fresh perspective, and you see OEMs promoting from within to provide a solid footing with a renewed zest moving forward. It is a fun time to be part of the industry – when the old playbook for becoming a leader has been updated in many respects.

What have you gotten from the ELC so far?
As one of the members who has been on the ELC from day one, it has been amazing to watch an idea take shape and thrive so quickly. This group is driven and there is zero selfishness – there is only a desire to develop new leaders and make the industry even stronger for many years to come. It has given me a renewed excitement for this up-and-coming class of leaders. When I first started in the industry, it took a couple different mentors of mine with strong ties to the associations to introduce me to key players and show me how to be part of committees and urge me to run for boards. Not everyone has those connections, or at least they didn't until the ELC was formed.

What are your hopes for the ELC's future?
My hope is that the ELC continues to reinvent itself and not become stale. I think the way that we have structured it to, in essence, turn over the coalition every few years forces new ideas and building upon the foundation that has been laid. It drives participation and the ideas flow in an environment that is open and accepting to try new things.

Bastian Kastner – Schattdecor national sales manager



How do you see the industry's current leadership landscape?
When I entered the U.S. RV industry eight years ago, many of the leadership positions were filled with senior management, and I believe this perfectly matched the market conditions with the target RV buyer in the baby boomer generation. Today, I notice that many companies in the RV industry are turning over leadership responsibilities to younger professionals – maybe because of retirement reasons, but I think more importantly, to address the new buyers of the Gen Z and millennial generations. Many of those individuals are part of the ELC, and I'm extremely humble to be part of this "street gang" (quote in reference to the keynote by Sterling Hawkins at the RV Leadership Conference). In the design landscape, this helped me and, respectively, our company to connect even better with OEMs and spark enthusiasm for our design-oriented surface solutions – especially if you're invited on stage.

What have you gotten from the ELC so far?
I was able to greatly extend my industry network and I learned a lot about the products from companies of those in the ELC that I have never thought of. At those events [RV Leadership Conference], you have the opportunity to think outside the box and innovate products to cater to a constantly changing market. The superb program

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of the meetings paired with networking opportunities are one of a kind. Additionally, I very much enjoyed the participation in the volunteering events. I believe this sets the right example for the generations to come.

Ashley Bontrager Lehman – Ember RV founder, CEO and president



What have you gotten from the ELC so far?

I appreciate the mission of the Emerging Leadership Coalition and what it offers to young people in our industry. Being connected and involved as an individual grows and moves up in their career is important, and I think the ELC does a great job of providing the avenue for emerging leaders to do that! I also like that they use volunteer activities to bring everyone together in a different way. It's a great opportunity to interact and build relationships in a different way than the typical industry event provides.

Personally, I've enjoyed being a member of the ELC and having the ability to connect with other like-minded industry members through the coalition. I am excited about what the future of our industry looks like knowing more of the emerging leaders we have involved in various spaces throughout the industry.

What are your hopes for the ELC's future?

I hope that the ELC continues to be a platform that brings young people together for the benefit of our industry and provides the path necessary to get them engaged for years to come. In addition to the coalition itself, events like the leadership conference and industry-wide volunteer events lead by the ELC will only continue to benefit not only the individuals who participate (which I would encourage everyone to!) but will also benefit the industry.

Nathan Wagler – nuCamp RV chief operating officer



How do you see the industry's current leadership landscape?

The RV industry has been led for a long time by a strong group of leaders. Those leaders have been handing off to new leaders within their companies and are strengthening the leadership dynamic within the industry because of that transition. New leaders are rising up and filling voids in existing organizations and new organizations and companies are creating opportunities for leaders. The biggest thing I am impressed with is the growing recognition of leadership to see that people are foundational to success and are not disposable or replaceable.

What have you gotten from the ELC so far?

Connection. As a small manufacturer located outside of the Elkhart bubble, it is easy to just do our own thing and miss out on the connection opportunity that RVIA has developed for this industry. By joining the ELC, I have been able to network with other like-minded leaders and develop new relationships. These relationships have been beneficial to our company and created some very real friendships with other company leaders in similar roles. The understanding and access to RVIA initiatives and events has allowed us to become more involved as a company within the industry.

What are your hopes for the ELC's future?

Our next hurdle with this coalition is the process of "graduating" our first class and maintaining momentum with a new cohort of leaders. New



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initiatives are fun and shiny when they launch, but the real work happens on the first cycle of change. We are focused on a healthy graduation process from ELC to other RVIA committees and involvement. I hope that the ELC becomes a great "farm system" for RVIA involvement and leadership. The group is a great way to maintain engagement for new leaders in the RV industry to understand the camaraderie that exists within the industry, as friendly competitors come together to create a strong industry and playing field for all.

Michilah Grimes - Lippert director of corporate and community impact



How do you see the industry's current leadership landscape?
I believe that now more than ever, industry leaders are more invested in empowering people to achieve personal fulfillment and find purpose within their roles. These leaders recognize the value of holistic well-being and truly want their teams to succeed, not only in their careers but in their personal lives as well. By investing in initiatives centered around leadership development, community engagement, skills training and team member recognition, to name a few, RV industry leaders are setting a precedent for manufacturing industries. They are rewriting the narrative to dispel the traditional top-down approach to innovation and utilizing team members' natural talents to drive change at all levels of the industry.

What have you gotten from the ELC so far?
Joining the ELC has afforded me the opportunity to meet amazing leaders across all segments of the industry that I otherwise would have never met. By co-chairing the RVIA Park Improvement Initiative, I experienced firsthand the positive impact this entire industry, from OEMs and suppliers to dealers and distributors, has when working together for the greater good. There is a sense of camaraderie within the coalition that fosters an open and honest dialogue around challenging topics, leading to collaborative problem-solving and better outcomes. By holding leadership trainings and events that invest in our emerging leaders, we are keeping these lines of communication open, ultimately uniting the industry even further.

What are your hopes for the ELC's future?
My hopes for the ELC in the future are to see continued growth and diversity, while challenging one another to step outside our comfort zones when it comes to engaging with the industry as a whole. Businesses are best positioned to change the world by caring about their team members, their families and the communities they serve. I believe the ELC has begun to uncover the opportunity to create actionable change by bridging the gap between industry segments, and I am excited to see the impact brought forth by these efforts. RVP





ARE YOU A GREAT MANAGER?

Rate yourself on these 10 indicators.

BY PHILLIP M. PERRY

Great management skills are more important than ever in today's tight labor market. Businesses large and small need to take steps to retain top-performing people and attract new ones. Dealing effectively with employees can do just that.

Management mastery, however, is not a one-and-done affair. Effective leaders continuously assess their workplace performance and seek ways to improve.

How good are you as a manager? In this article, business experts specify 10 indicators of effective leadership. Read what they have to say, then assess your own managerial skills by taking the accompanying quiz.





1. Do you listen well?
Effective listening is a core competency that underlies other management skills.

"When speaking with employees, managers need to hear both the words and the music," says Johanna Rothman, founder of Rothman Consulting Group in Arlington, Massachusetts. "That means understanding not just what the person is saying, but also the subtext."

Rothman gives an example.

"Suppose a manager asks Jane, 'Is everyone on your team working well together?' and she responds with a lackluster 'It's OK.' That, to me, is a big red flag and an early warning signal of bigger problems."

On the surface, notes Rothman, the word "OK" is positive. The subtext, though, is that Jane's team has dysfunctional elements that need to be addressed. Doing so will require follow-up questions that encourage Jane to speak out. A simple "tell me more about the situation" may do the trick.

2. Do you communicate company priorities clearly?
Shared goals energize a business.

"Everyone's priority should be the same as the company's top executive," says Lois P. Frankel, president of Corporate Coaching International in Pasadena, California. "When you talk about your company's big picture, where it's going and how the employees can help it get there, that's real leadership."

Inspired by the knowledge of the company's motivating mission, employees will develop their own creative techniques for boosting performance.

"People will not be managed. They will only be led," Frankel says. "Too often managers communicate how to do what needs to get done instead of letting people do it the way they want."

Good managers also create milestones to monitor progress, Frankel adds. They also check in regularly with staff members to share feedback.

"Everyone needs to feel that their unique skills are being used and further developed in a way that contributes to the priorities of the organization," she says.

3. Do you delegate effectively?
Delegation is not just about saving a manager's time and fostering operational efficiency. It's also about preparing employees for promotion.

"Step-up assignments are great tools for grooming people into higher levels of responsibility," says William J. Rothwell, professor of Workforce Education and Development at Pennsylvania State University. "And a great way to use them is to systematically delegate a manager's duties."

This technique is of particular value for workers who have expressed a desire to get ahead. Rothwell suggests telling such people that the process of delegation is intended to help them step up to more responsible positions.

Set reachable goals by delegating one or two items from the manager's job description every year.

"Proceeding slowly will allow time to coach the worker on effective techniques for mastering each duty," Rothwell says.

4. Do you challenge employees to set reasonable performance goals?
Employees are motivated to perform well when they have taken ownership of their future. Managers must ensure that workers buy into any mandated performance parameters. That process begins with a clearly drawn road map.

"If we set expectations that are not clearly understood, manager and employee will operate on different wavelengths," says Randy Goruk, president of The Randall Wade Group in Scottsdale, Arizona. "The manager expects X and the employee thinks, 'I'm going to do Y.' Next thing you know, you've got somebody not meeting expectations."

Seek assurances that the employee really understands what's expected of them, Goruk advises. One way to do that is to invite the individual to restate

Test Your Management Skills

How well do you manage people? Score yourself on each of these 10 skills. Obtain guidance from the corresponding sections of the article that accompanies this quiz. Total your score and check your rating at the bottom of the sidebar.

"I listen well."
Never: 0 Seldom: 4 Often: 8 Regularly: 10

"I communicate company priorities clearly."
Never: 0 Seldom: 4 Often: 8 Regularly: 10

"I delegate effectively."
Never: 0 Seldom: 4 Often: 8 Regularly: 10

"I challenge employees to set reasonable performance goals."
Never: 0 Seldom: 4 Often: 8 Regularly: 10

"I inspire my employees."
Never: 0 Seldom: 4 Often: 8 Regularly: 10

"I encourage employees to contribute ideas."
Never: 0 Seldom: 4 Often: 8 Regularly: 10

"I take a personal interest in my employees."
Never: 0 Seldom: 4 Often: 8 Regularly: 10

"I coach employees to rebound from performance shortfalls."
Never: 0 Seldom: 4 Often: 8 Regularly: 10

"I resolve conflicts in a productive way."
Never: 0 Seldom: 4 Often: 8 Regularly: 10

"I behave in a professional manner."
Never: 0 Seldom: 4 Often: 8 Regularly: 10

What's your score?

80 or more: Congratulations. You have gone a long way toward mastering the essential skills of management.

Between 60 and 80: It's time to fine tune your managerial practices.

Below 60: Your business is at risk. Take action on the suggestions in the accompanying story.

the expectations you have delineated. It's better to discover any disconnect now than six months down the road.

5. Do you inspire your employees?
Inspired employees work with greater enthusiasm and invent creative solutions to workplace problems. But how do you inspire someone? The task seems formidable and abstract.

The secret is to look at the big picture.

"The way to inspire people is to explain how the business service or product benefits employees, customers and society," Rothman says. "That will charge workers with the enthusiasm required to perform at peak levels of excellence."

Becoming an inspiring leader requires making a special effort to relate the goals of the employee and the company, Rothman adds. And that means moving beyond the management techniques one has employed in the past.

"If you cannot get rid of what you previously used to do, if you cannot move beyond your prior expertise, you will not be an inspiring leader," she says.

6. Do you encourage your employees to contribute ideas?
The best ideas come from people on the front lines. Top managers encourage employees to develop and communicate new and productive operational techniques based on their experience.

"You need to tap into the collective wisdom of the team," Frankel says. "Creating an environment where ideas are appreciated, recognized and rewarded will spark ideas that help the business achieve its priorities."

Encouraging worker contributions means going beyond the company suggestion box.

"Reinforce at every team meeting that there are no bad ideas," Frankel says. "People will speak up only if they understand that they will not be punished for doing so, and that the company wants everybody's ideas on the table."

When the business comes up with a new goal, Frankel says, throw it out to the employee pool and invite input.

"Many managers are afraid to ask for suggestions because they fear they will receive unworkable ideas," she says.

The fact is that employee groups tend to be self-correcting and will reject ideas that are impractical.

7. Do you take a personal interest in your employees?
Managers gain the trust of employees by engaging with them on a personal basis.

"Any good manager communicates a genuine interest in the well-being of workers," Rothwell says. "Doing so doesn't require a face-to-face structured conversation. It can be a hallway interaction of a minute or less. It can be a brief talk in the break room, the cafeteria, the parking lot or even online through direct messages."

Employees who trust their managers will not only work with greater commitment but will also share information they might otherwise keep secret from fear that it could damage their status in the company. Suppose a valued worker is planning to leave for employment elsewhere. If they feel secure enough to share such information, the manager can take steps to improve the work position in a way that will keep the person from jumping ship.

8. Do you help employees rebound from performance shortfalls?
Effective managers take the initiative quickly when employees fall short in their duties.

"If someone is performing poorly, don't surprise them at review time," Goruk says. "Have an early two-way conversation."

Goruk suggests leading off with an open-ended question such as: "How do you feel you're doing?" That provides an opening for the individual to express anything bothering them about their work experience. The manager can then follow up with a statement such as, "You know what? I've noticed the same thing."

The manager should provide specific examples of where the person has fallen short, including dates, times and numbers where possible.

"Ask what you can do to help them get back on track," Goruk says. "Develop a game plan: What steps can they take to resolve the problem? And when will you have a follow-up meeting to assess progress?"

9. Do you resolve conflicts in a productive way?
Organizational change often leads to workplace conflict. Dealing effectively with flare-ups is part of the leadership challenge.

While most managers would rather avoid the negative emotions that accompany workplace interventions, company profitability requires the maintenance of a smoothly running work environment.

"Effective managers need to realize that the ability to address conflict is a core competency that they must develop," says Pete Tosh, founder of The Focus Group in Macon, Georgia.

Effective managers learn the skills required to help employees deal with disagreements. That means directing the involved parties to reach realistic resolutions, casting light on perspectives and ideas that can improve business performance.

"Focus on solutions, not the problem," Tosh advises. "Concentrate on commonalities, the future and negotiation, rather than on differences, the past and emotion. Emphasize process, not content."

10. Do you behave in a professional manner?
Titles empower obedience; behavior earns respect.

"A leader's actions are far more important than their words," Tosh says. "People listen to talk, then watch the walk."

A manager's words and actions must be consistent for them to be believed. And they must also conform to the company policies and practices that have been championed by top leaders. Any deviation from them can create distrust.

"When we lead by example, our actions need to be consistent with our words," Tosh says. "No matter what we

say or how we ask others to behave, our actions will always serve as the truest indicator of our priorities."

Mastering Skills

How well have you mastered the 10 skills described in this article? Find out by taking the accompanying quiz. Your answers will help you draw up a self-improvement road map. Bear in mind that effective management is a process rather than a destination. Managers must continually learn new approaches and techniques to create an environment where employees perform at peak levels.

"People often make the mistake of feeling they have it made as soon as they are promoted into supervisory positions," Goruk says. "They stop learning and start coasting. And then they fail as effective managers."

In contrast, managers who make a concerted effort to improve their leadership performance end up creating motivated employees and greater profits.

"Some people are born with competencies that make it easier for them to be leaders," Tosh says. "But most people need to get some experience and training under their belts. The good news is that leadership is learnable. All it takes is an individual who wants to succeed." RVP

About the author: Award-winning journalist **Phillip M. Perry.**



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Building a #NoMatterWhat Culture

How RV companies can use new approaches to boost performance in a changing world.

BY STERLING HAWKINS



In a world filled with constant change and uncertainty, RV dealers can create a culture to produce results beyond circumstances.

There is no shortage of excuses in today's world that has been forever disrupted by pandemic fallout, staffing challenges, supply chain issues, global instability and accelerating change on all fronts. The unknown and even uncomfortable is inevitable and growing, which leaves companies and leaders a choice. Lean on all the reasons performance might be sub-par, as valid as they may be. Or build a critical new cultural competency to effectively perform in an increasingly unpredictable world. In other words, build a #NoMatterWhat culture.

#NoMatterWhat is an approach I've developed from more than a decade of personal experience, research, psychology, case studies and philosophy. It's not easy to get results regardless of the circumstances, but my work throughout countless industries shows that it is possible. And, arguably necessary just to keep up. It's not change that happens overnight, but change that requires consistent practice of a few key things.

Trade Goals for #NoMatterWhats

Goals are common for just about every team and company. What's not common is a commitment to those goals #NoMatterWhat. It's not an excuse to compromise safety for sales or ethics for efficiency – core values are important guideposts for growth. But when you're committed to something #NoMatterWhat, it calls you forward in new and more demanding ways.

None of us can control the world and circumstances do sometimes come up that derail progress. It's inevitable. But those challenges aren't a stopping point (or even a personal failure). They're an opportunity for more determination, creativity and new approaches that often can't be seen prior.

Problems Draw the Starting Line

We all have problems achieving our aims – if we didn't, then we'd have achieved them already! Problems aren't actually the problem (see what I did there?). Problems only get in the way when they stop any forward action. Company cultures that list



Sterling Hawkins is a sought-after keynote speaker, author and entrepreneur committed to unlocking personal and organizational potential through his company, Sterling Hawkins Group. You can learn more about his work at sterlinghawkins.com.



out problems as to why they can't achieve results will be stuck with those problems and poor performance. Cultures and teams that acknowledge problems, but don't use them as excuses (as valid as they may be) will be able to continue to put wins on the board regardless of the circumstances.

Companies can offer brainstorming sessions, workshop space, lateral thinking courses and dedicated creative time to create the space to think about things in new ways. Remember, best practices are only the best way someone has come up with doing it thus far. There's no reason your approach needs to mimic what has been done before – it's a chance to do something new.

The Courage to Be Accountable

Holding someone accountable isn't easy – and it's probably not comfortable to be held accountable yourself. We all know accountability leads to higher performance, but when it comes down to it, it's easier to skip those conversations or let details slide.

#NoMatterWhat cultures have the courage never to skip it. There's a level of personal and organizational accountability designed to help teams hit their goals and support them when they miss to discover why and how to adjust. Instead of leaving it to chance, you can build a standardized process of meetings and reports to have that accountability built in.

Don't fall into the trap of relying on self-accountability. It's important to be self-accountable, but it's really only reliable for maintaining your existing level of performance. Reaching for that next level, personally or professionally, really does take having a specific deliverable, at a specific time, with a specific person. Individuals with that level of accountability are 95% more likely to achieve their goal. Built into the culture within a team, and it's even better: four times as likely to achieve their goals.

Your Goals = Your Customer Goals

Companies are often focused on their sales (as they should be), but sometimes it can blind them to a bigger picture: that every sale they make is driving aspirations their customers have, as well. This is especially evident in the RV industry as purchases are typically about enabling a lifestyle more connected to the outdoors. Each sale you and your team make might be fulfilling your sales quota, but they're also fulfilling the dreams of the buyer.

Cultures that intentionally practice keeping their goals aligned with customer goals will result in everyone winning. And aligning your goals with your customers' goals makes you unstoppable in your work together.

Mission #NoMatterWhat

All too often, I see company mission statements that have been developed solely by their PR team. How do I know? If you ask most people what the mission is within an organization, nobody is quite sure. Then why have it? Other than maybe looking pretty on the website.

True missions live within the hearts of the teams that are doing the work. If you don't have one that lives true within your culture, many people will default to their own agendas (which may or may not be aligned with the results you ultimately want to create). A true mission is a north star that calls the team forward in the face of any obstacles you might be facing.

What is your work really about? What change are you enabling for the world? And how does that resonate with each member on the team? The answers to those questions will at least start to orient you to a mission that matters.

Let's be real, even with these practices done perfectly, results can never be promised. But we can trade predictability for these practices to be ready for anything that comes next – within the RV industry and otherwise.

The short-term will be filled with ups and downs, good things and bad. Adhering to these cultural practices will raise your performance in the long term – #NoMatterWhat. RVP

POWER SOLUTIONS



SURGE PROTECTORS

Arcon, Exeter, Pennsylvania, presents its 30A and 50A Surge Protectors. Arcon Surge Protectors protect your downstream electronics and RV appliances from voltage spikes and surges. Arcon 30A or 50A surge protectors can absorb and divert high voltage and detect low voltage and improper wiring conditions. Equipped with multi-lightning strike protection, these products quickly divert the strike energy to the ground. The 50A model can handle up to 7,200 joules of power suppression and offers four different modes of protection. Keep valuables and equipment safe using Arcon Surge Protectors.

arconelectrical.com



LITHIUM IRON PHOSPHATE BATTERY

Briter Products, South Bend, Indiana, presents its Ion-Ready Lithium Iron Phosphate Battery. The Ion-Ready lithium battery is the longest-lasting battery designed for RVs. Its casing is fire-resistant and houses the first and only serviceable and completely resettable battery. After an average of 15 years life, the reusable nonconducting metal case can be fitted with new cells. Comprised of long-lasting components installed with standard-surpassing processes, the battery supports off-grid, independent living.

briterproducts.com

WIRELESS MONITOR

ASA Electronics, Elkhart, Indiana, offers its WiSight 2.0 technology. ASA knows the challenges that come with wireless systems, especially when on the road. ASA's WiSight 2.0 technology digitally locks the camera to the monitor and blocks all outside signals. This eliminates interference and noise typical of analog wireless systems and delivers a sharp, vivid picture of the vehicle's surroundings to the monitor. A quality monitor can provide peace of mind, safety and ease of use.

voyagercameras.com/rv-systems





BATTERY SUPPORT UNIT

CTEK, Chicago, Illinois, offers its PRO25S. The PRO25S from CTEK is a powerful and reliable 25A battery support unit, perfect for everyday servicing and diagnostic work. It's also a smart battery charger and maintainer, suitable for all types of 12-volt batteries, including lithium (LiFePO4). Fully automatic and easy to use, it has a built-in temperature sensor to achieve maximum charge levels. The PRO25S has integrated safety features, so it's safe for the battery and the vehicle.

smartercharger.com



SURGE PROTECTORS

Dicor Products, an Airxcel brand, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Dicor Surge Protectors. A new line of RV surge protectors from Dicor Power Products. Designed to protect RVs from dangerous voltage levels and power surges caused by faulty hookups or weather-related events. Available in weather resistant 30-amp plug, 30-amp pigtail and 50-amp pigtail. Each surge protector is equipped with automatic shut off/on, easily visible surge indicator and diagnostic lights, incorrect wiring fault indicators and a limited lifetime warranty. Pigtails also feature metal locking ring.

dicorproducts.com



LITHIUM IRON PHOSPHATE BATTERY FOR 12-VOLT ACCESSORIES

Dometic, Stockholm, Sweden, offers its Dometic PLB40, a 40-amp-hour (ah) lithium iron phosphate battery designed specifically to power Dometic CFX coolers and other 12-volt accessories. The 40 ah capacity provides ample power to run a CFX and other electronics for an entire weekend, but it can also be easily recharged from 12DC, AC or solar, if the adventure calls for extended times away from outlets. The compact design and advanced battery technology are key to unlocking the true ability to get off the grid and stay there.

dometic.com



RV VOLTAGE PROTECTOR

Camco Mfg., Greensboro, North Carolina, offers its Power Grip RV Voltage Protector. Power Grip's RV Voltage Protectors with Integrated Surge Protection connect to your campsite's power pedestal. They protect against faults/wiring issues and won't provide power to your RV if there's electrical issues during startup. After startup, electricity will be supplied if the power is OK. If there are surges, high/low voltage levels through the power pedestal, power will be disconnected, reconnecting after normal operating conditions are restored. Features integrated surge protection of up to 2,450 joules (30A) / 3,850 joules (50A).

camco.net/home



LITHIUM-ION BATTERY TECHNOLOGY

Dragonfly Energy and Battle Born Batteries, Reno, Nevada, presents its Battle Born Batteries with Dragonfly IntelLigence, which open the door to full power system connectivity, communication and safety. With an expanding line of accessories, the capabilities are limitless. The smart lithium-ion battery technology delivers groundbreaking communication, designed to give users the utmost confidence in their power system by providing unparalleled monitoring, notification, performance and safety tools. Battle Born Batteries equipped with the Dragonfly IntelLigence give dependable smart power, with the safety that's needed.

battlebornbatteries.com



MOBILE POWER STATION CONVERTER

Expion360, Redmond, Oregon, offers its E360 Aura Powercap 600. Explore and take your power on the go with E360 Aura Powercap 600. The Aura is designed to fit and convert any one of Expion360 Group 24 lithium batteries into a 600-watt mobile power station. Power AC appliances with the built-in pure sine wave 600-watt inverter. Power lighting, coolers, fans and other 12-volt appliances through the 12-volt, 10-amp power port. Charge smart phones, cameras, tablets, drones and other portable electronic devices on the go.

expion360.com



BLUETOOTH ADVANCED LITHIUM BATTERY

Go Power!, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, offers its new Sun Cycle 100Ah Advanced Lithium Battery. This new line adds enhanced safety and communication features to its flagship lithium battery line. The lightweight, Bluetooth-enabled LiFePo4 battery has an advanced BMS, temperature management system, a built-in DC heater and auto-cell balancing for larger battery banks. It can be wired in series or parallel and has built-in handles and mounting options.

gopowersolar.com/lithium



PORTABLE POWER STATION

Furrion, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Furrion Trekker Portable Power Station. The Furrion Trekker portable power station is the perfect sidekick for off-grid camping and boating trips, emergency situations and power outages. It features a heavy-duty, hard plastic shell for long-lasting durability and is incredibly lightweight and compact, so you can easily pack it with your camping gear or emergency supplies. The built-in handle also makes it easy to carry on any outdoor excursion.

furrion.com



POWER INLETS

Hughes Autoformers, Anaheim, California, presents its SafeView Power Inlet. Patent-pending and loaded with features, the SafeView Power Inlets warn you of dangerous conditions when you hook up an RV. They can detect open ground, open neutral and even reversed polarity. Keep your RV and you safe.

hughesautoformers.com



D/C MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Intellitec Products, DeLand, Florida, offers its SMART B.I.R.D. with Communication Capability. The Bi-Directional Isolator Relay Delay (B.I.R.D.) is a core piece of a DC management system that has RV-C communication capability. The B.I.R.D. will bridge two battery banks together when either battery has a charging source present. It will isolate the batteries when the charging source is removed or when both battery banks are fully charged. The B.I.R.D. can also provide auxiliary start power when the chassis battery is low and unable to start the vehicle.

intellitec.com



DLS BATTERY CHARGERS

IOTA, Tucson, Arizona, presents its DLS Series Battery Chargers. IOTA proudly services the RV market with premium DLS battery chargers and IQ automatic multistage charge controllers. DLS (Dual-State, Line/Load Controlled, Switch-Mode) converters and chargers provide the necessary capability of taking AC power from either a pedestal or generator and converting it to clean DC voltage for powering radios, fans and pumps, or to charge and maintain the RV's onboard batteries. Multistage IQ control plug and play control options add additional peace of mind battery protection.

Iotaengineering.com







DUAL USB AND A/C OUTLET

Magnadyne, Compton, California, offers its AUX-USB-FMACTC. The dual USB and A/C outlet includes 12- to 24-volt D/C input, a silicon dustproof cover, 5-volt 4.8 (shared), 0.25 quick disconnect terminals, D/C 9-36-volt and blue LED lighting.

magnadyne.com



BATTERY AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mastervolt, Amsterdam, presents its MLI Ultra 1250 Battery. The MLI Ultra 1250 has a realistic life span of more than 2,000 cycles at a depth of discharge of 80%, meaning five times more energy storage than lead acid batteries. The MLI Ultra 1250 can be fully recharged within 60 minutes and offers MasterBus, CZone and NMEA2000 compatible communication. The battery is equipped with a Mastervolt Battery Management System that ensures optimal use of each individual cell. This self-learning, balancing algorithm predicts the behavior of each individual battery cell and balances proactively, resulting in a faster and more efficient charge cycle.

mastervolt.com



QUIET INVERTER GENERATOR

Midland Power, Toronto, Ontario, presents its Energizer 4,500-watt Quiet Inverter Generator. The eZV4500i is a portable and powerful solution for all your energy needs. Whether you're hosting an event, working on a jobsite, camping in an RV or dealing with a power outage, this compact inverter generator delivers safe and reliable power. Remote and electric start, automatic throttle and automatic choke are included to make powering your life as effortless as pressing a button.

energizergenerators.com



RV A/C SOFT STARTERS

Micro-Air, the EasyStart and EasyTouch RV people, Allentown, New Jersey, offers its EasyStart 364-X20 and X36. The EasyStart 364 is the proven RV A/C soft starter that permits two A/C units on 30-amp power and one A/C on driveway power, like 15/20-amp power and boondocking on small 2,200-watt generators. Proven with sales of more than 100,000 units, both DIY consumer and OEMs love this product. And now, the Double Down Extended Warranty: Install this product on your A/C (six years or younger) and get the customer a free warranty on your compressor motor.

microair.net

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PERMANENT RV GENERATORS

Next Gen Power, Elkhart, Indiana, offers its Flex Power Generator, the next generation of RV generators, designed for permanent installation. The Flex Power generator runs on a flexible and reliable single cylinder, 225cc OHV air-cooled engine with a digital governor. It is designed to be compact, quiet, powerful and efficient and offered in 4,000 and 5,500 watts. Power an RV's appliances directly or recharge your battery bank for extended off-grid boondocking. Located in Elkhart. For more information, call 574-206-4540.

nxtgenpower.com

POWER CONVERTER



Progressive Dynamics, Marshall, Michigan, presents its PD9300 Series Power Converter. Introducing the multi-battery charging system with selectable charging for flooded lead acid, AGM and lithium. Utilizing Progressive Dynamics TCMS technology, new battery selection with the push of a button and a visible indicator light makes it easy to tell which battery is in use.

progressivedyn.com

PORTABLE POWER STATION



RELiON Battery, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, offers its Outlaw 1072s Portable Power Station. From laptops and lights to TVs and refrigerators, the Outlaw can power small to medium devices and appliances. The inherently safe LiFePO4 technology delivers seven times longer life span compared to other lithium options on the market with 3,500 cycles. The portable power solution offers high battery capacity with 1,000 watts continuous and 2,000 watts peak. Additionally, it can be charged at home or on the go with either an A/C wall charger or in the sun with 12 to 25-volt/160-watt max solar input charging.

relionbattery.com

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www.balrvproducts.com





MONOCRYSTALLINE SOLAR PANEL

Renogy, Ontario, California, presents its Renogy Bifacial Monocrystalline Solar Panel. With the ability to capture sunlight from both sides, the Renogy Bifacial 220-watt, 12-volt Monocrystalline Solar Panel provides up to 30% more energy compared to traditional panels. Features include more energy even in partial shade – innovative design incorporates PERC, half-cut cell, bypass diodes and 10 busbar technologies; more generation on snow days; fast and easy installation with 20 pre-drilled holes on the panel back, ideal for off-grid applications including RVs, rooftops, cabins, yachts and sunrooms.

renogy.com



INTELLIGENT BATTERY CHARGER

Schumacher Electric Corp., Fort Worth, Texas, presents its Schumacher SDC371. It is important to have multiple charging options, whether you live off grid permanently or simply enjoy RV travel. The Schumacher SDC371 40-amp 12-volt DC-DC Intelligent Battery Charger makes charging your auxiliary battery as simple as driving to your destination. The SDC371 features a solar priority button, intelligent three-stage charging and can be installed anywhere in your vehicle, such as in the engine compartment, chassis rail or passenger cabin.

schumacherelectric.com



WATERPROOF BATTERY GUARD

Samlex America, Burnaby, British Columbia, offers its BGW-40 Waterproof Battery Guard. Batteries are expensive, protect them with a Samlex BGW Battery Guard. The BGW Series are intelligent, user programmable battery guards that prevent excessive discharge of the battery. They have an automatic voltage detection system with a choice of 10 on/off threshold voltage program, for both 12-volt and 24-volt battery systems. The new design is waterproof, prevents damage to connected components in an RV, and is available in 40, 60 and 200 amps.

bit.ly/41DYpDr



ARITY INDICATOR SYSTEM

SmartPlug Systems, Seattle, Washington, offers its SmartPlug RV Cordset with Reverse Polarity Indicator System. SmartPlug Systems specializes in power delivery systems for RVs, boats and a variety of specialty vehicles and miscellaneous industrial applications. With more than 27 times metal-to-metal surface contact versus the twist-type system, SmartPlug's products efficiently transfer electrical power and minimizes the potential for overheating. Also, the connectors push straight into the inlets, which make it easy to use. SmartPlug Systems is developing and providing innovative world-class solutions that make power delivery safer, more secure and easier to use.

smartplug.com



SURGE GUARD WITH APP

Southwire, Carrollton, Georgia, presents its Surge Guard 50A with App. Now, you can easily access everything you need to know about your Surge Guard, wherever your adventures lead you. Easily monitor the power to your RV, see errors in real-time, know when power will be restored, understand and track error history, easily access troubleshooting and how-to guides.

southwire.com



ELECTRIC TONGUE JACK

Stromberg Carlson, Traverse City, Michigan, offers its Electric Tongue Jack. Stromberg Carlson's JET-3755 electric tongue jack is rated for 3,500 pounds with built-in motor protection to guard your investment. It has 18 inches of travel with an additional 5-inch drop down leg. The JET-3755 includes a built-in level and two separate LED lights for easy nighttime hookups. A removable 5.5-inch diameter footpad prevents sinking into gravel or soft ground. Backed by a limited two-year warranty.

strombergcarlson.com

LED LIGHTING

Valterra Products, Mission Hills, California, presents its Diamond LED Platinum Series. The Diamond LED Platinum Series includes the best technology with the No. 1 Diode in the world, Phillips Lumileds, and a new cutting-edge design. LED bulbs are more efficient, less costly and better for the environment because they use less energy than alternatives. An LED bulb's life span is around 50,000 hours, or about 10 years – that's 10 times longer than incandescent. The Platinum Series replaces the top five most common applications. Available in cool white (5,500K) and warm white (3,500K), plus a seven-year warranty.

valterra.com



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SOLAR GENERATOR ADAPTABLE BATTERY



Yoshino Power, Los Angeles, presents its B330 SST, B660 SST, B2000 SST and B4000 SST. Yoshino Power has created the world's first solid-state technology (SST) solar generator adaptable battery in a portable power station. The battery is built around a state-of-the-art solid electrolyte in place of the bulky and flammable liquid electrolyte found in traditional lithium batteries, which improves performance and represents a leap forward for battery technology. Higher energy density means the same amount of power fits into a smaller, lighter package compared to traditional lithium batteries. Whereas liquid electrolytes are flammable and can catch fire if a battery is damaged or overheated, SST batteries have reduced risk because they use a solid electrolyte.

yoshinopower.com

AIR HEATER WITH BLUETOOTH



Webasto, Fenton, Michigan, offers its air heater with Bluetooth connect. A Webasto air heater is an optimal auxiliary application for the RV market, boasting a space-saving design, quiet operation, high heat output and low fuel consumption. The company's Air Top Evo 40 interior heater RV kit offers both gas and diesel options, offers an automatic high-altitude output up to 18,000 feet (diesel) and is operated by a Bluetooth-enabled controller to access more diagnostic information right from your mobile app.

webasto-comfort.com

SOLAR AWNING

Xponent Power, Fremont, California, offers its Xpanse solar awning. Xponent presents Xpanse, a patented, ultra-compact, sensor-enabled, intelligent solar awning that delivers 1,200 watts to an RV for powering off-grid adventures. Xpanse combines high-efficiency silicon solar cell technology with an innovative system design to deliver a high-performance solar awning that deploys seamlessly at the push of a button. Xpanse is designed to be a "one-size-fits-all" system that is universally installable on most makes/models of RVs and features a sensor enabled, highly intelligent, wind-tolerant design that automatically retracts in adverse environmental conditions.



xponentpower.com



MOBILE POWER SOLUTION FOR DOMETIC CHARGING KIT

Zamp Solar, Bend, Oregon, offers its OBSIDIAN Series 100-watt Dometic PLB40 Charging Kit. The portable kit is the perfect mobile power solution to quickly charge a Dometic PLB40 portable lithium charging station. This complete kit features a patented low-profile solar panel wrapped in a heavy-duty case to provide the ultimate flexibility and durability for mobile off-grid solar charging. Each solar module is handcrafted in the U.S., starting with industry-leading premium materials, and is constructed utilizing precision manufacturing techniques to exceed off-grid power needs.

zampsolar.com



BATTERY DETECTION SYSTEM

WFCO Electronics, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Auto-Detect Battery Detection. Auto-Detect is a patent-pending, intelligent battery detection system that automatically selects the correct charging profiles for both lead acid and lithium-ion batteries – standard on all WFCO converters, power centers and MBAs. The new microprocessor-driven technology recognizes lithium-ion and lead-acid battery chemistries, and automatically adjusts the charging profile to match the battery type. Auto-Detect enables RV owners to optimize their batteries without using any buttons, dials or switches.

wfcoelectronics.com

SMART BATTERY ISOLATOR



AIMS Power, Reno, Nevada, presents its Smart Battery Isolator designed specifically for use in multi-battery applications. The AIMS Power isolator primarily monitors the main starter battery voltage. Once either battery voltage reaches 13.2 volts, the solenoid automatically connects the auxiliary battery to the charging system. When the entire battery system drops below 12.7 volts, the solenoid opens and isolates the starter battery from the auxiliary battery. This ensures you never have a drained starter battery. A safe way to charge your auxiliary battery while driving, the 300 amp, 12-volt Smart Battery Isolator monitors both battery voltages and is cost-effective protection against a flat start battery. The optional Smart Switch allows for manual control linking the two batteries together with a push of a button for 60 seconds.

aimscorp.net

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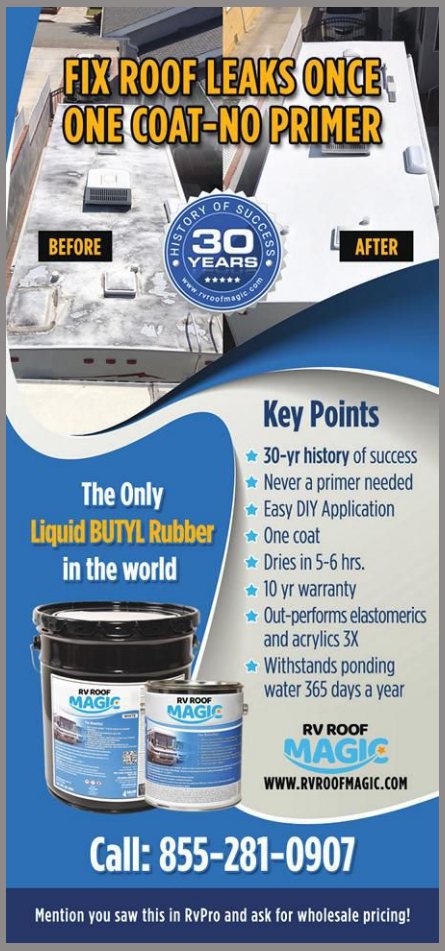
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Pit Stop



LESS IS MORE

Consumers have developed an appetite for going all out with how they spend time and what they buy, to make up for lost time over the last few years. *Go RVing's April Trends Report* found:

- **66% of 25- to 44-year-old domestic travelers** view multitasking as the most efficient way to achieve goals.
- **22-point increase in Google searches** for how to "maximize time" since 2018.
- **56% of U.S. workers** plan to take a "hush trip" in 2023 – working remotely without notifying their boss to maximize travel time.

"This is an opportunity to inform people that RVing is traveling 'to the max' too, especially in terms of what you can bring with you. Close to 1 in 3 RV owners bring a bicycle while RVing, and 18% pack a kayak."

SOURCE: GO RVING MONTHLY TRENDS REPORT



ON THE BOOKS IN 2023

The popularity of spring as a planning period for camping

- **24% of campers have planned all of their 2023 trips vs. 9% of non-camping travelers**
- **8% of campers haven't started looking** at 2023 trips or have uncertain plans vs. 30% of non-camping travelers

"Campers are an especially fervent group of travel enthusiasts, and we can especially see this in how they plan," said Whitney Scott, Kampgrounds of America senior vice president of strategy.

MARCH SHIPMENTS

31,869 TOTAL RV SHIPMENTS

50.8% DECREASE compared to March 2022 (64,778 units)

"As camping season approaches, the RV industry continues to produce innovative products that will open the door for great outdoor experiences," said RVIA President and CEO Craig Kirby. "As consumers head to RV dealerships across the country this spring and summer, they will find many affordable options across all product types that will help them begin a journey towards a lifetime of memorable RV and camping experiences with friends and family."



GIVING BACK

Following National Volunteer Week and Earth Day in April, here's a peek at what the RV industry is doing to help communities:

- **THOR Industries' "Pick Up America"** program pledged to remove 80 tons of trash from U.S. public lands in 2023. The program has removed more than 280 tons of trash since its launch.
- **Truma's annual Spring Clean-up** tapped record volunteers through local government and the RV Women's Alliance to clean up Elkhart's County Road 6.
- **Lippert helped box and distribute 108,000** essential food items, school supplies and toiletries for local schools and nonprofits.
- **RVIA's Emerging Leaders Coalition** is planning the second annual All-Industry Volunteer Day on May 10. More than 400 volunteers participated in the event last year.

And many, many others!

SOURCE: RVIA.ORG

Mark Your Calendar



This year's **National Go RVing Day is June 10,** spotlighting the industry and RVing's many benefits within an outdoor lifestyle. The day also encourages those in the industry to visit their favorite outdoor destinations for the weekend.

A toolkit to promote the national "holiday" is available online.

www.cavagnana.com

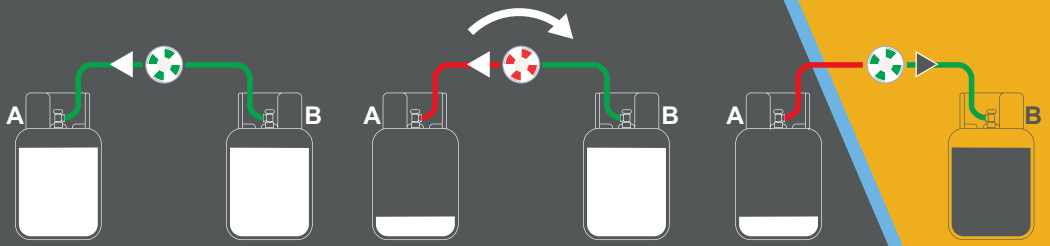
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