APRIL 2024 RV-PRO.COM

RV PRO

DELTA DREAMING

How in-depth crowd-sourcing led to the design of Alliance's newest double-axle travel trailer.



Spotlight on Sustainability: Companies Discuss Their Eco-Conscious Commitment

CAMPING GEAR TRENDS

REFRESH YOUR DEALERSHIP *FOR SPRING*

MINUTES MATTER



New 5th Wheel Pallet Kits from Husky Towing Products make ordering, stocking and installing our classic 5th Wheel hitches easier than ever. These one box kits contain the same high quality components you and your customers have come to expect from the Husky brand, and feature a preassembled set of standard 5th Wheel legs that are ready to mount using industry standard (ISR) base rails. Order one part number, receive one box and reduce installation time by up to 15 minutes. Because time is money, and minutes matter.

Husky 5th Wheel Hitches

- Up to 20,000 lb GTW
- Up to 6,000 lb vertical load rating
- Fully articulating head with anti-walk around jaw
- Self-locking handle
- Pop out safety indicator
- Preassembled and pretorqued base

HUSKY®
TOWING PRODUCTS

Exclusively distributed by ntpstag

SCAN HERE to learn more!

Just because it looks like a Truma doesn't mean it works like a Truma.



Truma Combi - The Original

"Simply Better" | truma.com/us/

truma



DOES YOUR RIDE FLEX?

Let your suspension upgrade speak for itself as everyone sees your red Dexter E-Z Flex® equalizer. Dexter's patented compressed rubber design and robust lubricated pivot bushing provide superior ride quality for the life of your unit.

Paired with Dexter heavy-duty shackle links, customers can ride smoothly and carefree with their new upgraded suspension.

Demand red and black on your next trailer - look for the red E-Z Flex® so you know your trailer will be one smooth ride!

www.dexteraxle.com

ONE.





OPERATION. NAVIGATION. ENTERTAINMENT. ALL IN ONE.

VIEO™ RV INFOTAINMENT SERIES
PORTABLE 8" OR 10"

Garmin has combined multiple technologies to bring you a fully integrated RV experience with effortless systems control, superior navigation and top-tier entertainment solutions.

© 2024 Garmin Ltd. or its subsidiaries.

GARMIN

APRIL 2024

In this issue

VOL. 20, NO.4







RV MANUFACTURERS

14 Doubling Down
Alliance RV's newest double-axle has something to offer every type of weekend warrior.

SPECIAL FEATURE

20 RV Supplier Pioneers Sustainable Practices
Walex shows its dedication to sustainability.

24 The Next Move in Sustainability: Making the Switch to Lithium
An energy solution that benefits the user and the environment.

26 Why Sustainability Reports Matter
THOR Industries, Patrick Industries and REV Group discuss the key points they report on each year.

31 Are You Green Enough?
TRA Certification answers that question for manufacturers.

34 Follow That Rabbit!
Briter Products' conservation efforts – plus 10 sustainability tips.

36 Are We Allowed To Ask Questions About Sustainability Yet?
Exploring sustainability concerns and what it means for business.

RV AFTERMARKET

18 Must-Know Camping Gear Trends
Learn about Kuma Outdoor Gear and what campers are looking for.

48 Special Product Focus
The aftermarket showcase spotlights Camping Products.

RUNNING THE BUSINESS

38 RV Dealer Websites: Why You Can't Just Set It & Forget It
Best practices to implement to stay competitive online.

41 Understanding PVR & How It Can Improve F&I Revenue
Boost satisfaction and help customers get value for their money.

44 Sustaining Your Parts & Accessories Customer Base
Positively affect both Mother Nature and your sales by being more eco-friendly.

46 Spring Refresh
Even small changes can make a store feel new and fresh.



ON THE COVER
Alliance's Delta is available in seven different floorplans. Photo courtesy of Alliance RV.

DEPARTMENTS

6 Editor's Note
8 News
12 Community
54 Product Highlights
55 Ad Index
56 Pit Stop

CERTIFIED AUDIENCE RV PRO (USPS 024-712) is published monthly by Cahaba Media Group, PO Box 530067, Birmingham, AL 35223. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, AL and additional mailing offices. Free to qualified recipients within the United States and U.S. Possessions. Publisher reserves the right to determine qualifications. Annual Subscription Prices: U.S. – one year, $45; two years, $80; three years, $108. Canada – one year, $76; two years, $142, three years, $201 (U.S. Funds); All other countries – one year $98, two years $186, three years, $267 (U.S. funds). Customer Service, call 800-256-2785. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to RV PRO, PO Box 271, Lincolnshire, IL 60069-9835. All items submitted to RV PRO become the sole property of RV PRO and Cahaba Media Group and cannot be reproduced without the written consent of the publisher. Advertisers and/or their agencies, jointly and severally, assume all liabilities for printed advertisements in RV PRO. Opinions expressed in RV PRO may not necessarily reflect the opinion of the magazine, its management or its advertisers. Letters, photographs and manuscripts welcome.

Go Power! | DOMETIC

SUN CYCLE™ ADVANCED LITHIUM BATTERY

AVAILABLE NOW



300AH ADVANCED LITHIUM SMART BATTERY

- ✓ Bluetooth®-enabled, smart features and RV-C compatibility
- ✓ Built-in DC heater
- ✓ IP67 waterproof (should not be submerged)
- ✓ Reserve Capacity Feature
- ✓ Built-In Mounting Options
- ✓ Works with the PowerTrak™ display
- ✓ 10-year warranty
- ✓ Improved Battery Management System (BMS) protects against:
  - Over and under voltage
  - Over and under temperature
  - Charge and discharge over current
  - Short circuit

Bluetooth® RV-C Compatible

Learn more at
GOPOWERSOLAR.COM/ADVLITHIUM

RV PRO



Mother Nature means business.

Especially in an industry whose heart mimics the thundering mountains, rolling paths and diverse connections of the environment. At the RV Industry Association (RVIA)'s Leadership Conference this March, kayaking Florida's junglelike Estero River, helping clean up communities after Hurricane Ian's impact and learning from innovators guiding our unique market into a new era, one thing was made certain – the call to enjoy the outdoors is an invitation and responsibility to everyone.

A recent survey from TheRoundup.com found the "trend" of eco-friendly consumers is here to stay, with 78% saying sustainability is important and 84% considering poor environmental practices a reason to veto a brand or company – and even 55% willing to pay more for "eco-conscious" products. In other words, making the shift to a sustainable future has become both a necessity and profitable journey.

RVIA's event gave me a chance to learn from people like Kartik Mekala, Lippert's director of sustainability, and Sandy Rynalski, THOR Industries' vice president of ESG (environmental, social and governance) – two of many joining forces to maximize corporations' positive impact on the environment and our communities. That also means sustaining companies' bottom lines, which Mekala made evident in his talk that explained Lippert's nearly $25,000 monthly savings by simply having sensors for its facility lights.

On pg. 12, read about RELiON Battery's partnership to provide clean water in East Africa and the workings of sustainability reports from Patrick Industries, REV Group and THOR on pg. 20. Sometimes, even something as small as an RVer's pet rabbit can spark new ideas that benefit the environment, customers and communities while saving businesses money. Meet Stashe the rabbit on pg. 34.

This is only the second edition of RV PRO's special Sustainability issue, and it's one we're proud to print. Hear from more than 10 companies on what matters most, and how out-of-the-box thinking is leading to new heights in RV manufacturing and collaboration throughout the industry.

While RV market's journey to a sustainable future for all is only just beginning, it has become a meeting ground for different segments, competitors and goals to work in unison toward an overall cause: making the RV industry one that sees no end in sight, given its ability to adapt to a shifting and more "conscious" world that needs all hands on deck.



EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Jennifer King
205-278-2826
jdking@cahabamedia.com

MANAGING EDITOR
Jordan Benschop
720-784-8074
jbenschop@cahabamedia.com

MANAGING EDITOR
Michele Moore
720-784-8073
mmoore@cahabamedia.com

CONTRIBUTORS
Darian Armer, Linda Cahan, Mel Selway, Ronnie Wendt

CREATIVE SERVICES

ART DIRECTOR
Melanie Magee

DIGITAL PROJECT MANAGER
Greg Ragsdale

DIGITAL PRODUCTION DESIGNER
Shelby Dempsey

WEB DEVELOPER
Greg Caudle

ADVERTISING

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Gannon Greene
205-915-7296
ggreene@cahabamedia.com

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Rebecca Tittel
720-784-8081
rtittel@cahabamedia.com

SALES DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTAIVE
Kaylor Hagerla
205-745-1883
khagerla@cahabamedia.com

CLIENT SERVICES COORDINATOR
Holly Strickland
hstrickland@cahabamedia.com

CAHABA MEDIA GROUP

Publisher
Matthew G. Conroy

Vice President of Sales
Greg Meineke

Vice President of Finance
Brandon Whittemore

Director of Content
Elizabeth Manning

Director of Operations
Laurie Tisdale

Director of Sales
Stacy Marshall

PO Box 530067
Birmingham, AL 35223
Phone: 205-212-9402 • rv-pro.com

RVDA ASSOCIATE MEMBER
RV INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

We put more into our RVs so you can put more on the road.



More innovation, more focus, more loyalty. We build for the end of the journey and everything that happens along the way. That's why our carefully concepted, engineered, and crafted lineup of travel trailers, fifth wheels, and toy haulers is one of the most popular brands for RV owners. That's what makes the Grand Design family of recreational vehicles the best on the road, and on the lot.



GRAND DESIGN™
RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

MORE OF WHAT MATTERS

WWW.GRANDDESIGNRV.COM

David Gardner Named RVIA Manager of Federal Affairs


Gardner

The RV Industry Association (RVIA)'s government affairs department recently hired David Gardner as its new manager of federal affairs.

RVIA's government affairs staff are the association's industry experts for its members, state legislators, regulators and RV industry stakeholders. The team champions the RV industry on Capitol Hill and closely follows relevant legislation and policies. Gardner was added to assist with these advocacy efforts.

Originally from Massachusetts, Gardner graduated from American University in 2021 before working as committee staff for the Senate Committee on Environment Public Works. He later also gained experience working for the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, where he focused on public lands and outdoor recreation issues.

"I dove into a ton of unique topics," Gardner said of his time working for the committees. "I worked with many of the same legislative issues I'm focusing on now – outdoor recreation and public lands' issues. It's the 'fun portfolio' because it's about being outside."

In Gardner's new role as the association's manager of federal affairs, he will lead the RV industry's legislative priorities with decision-makers on Capitol Hill and with the Biden administration.

"It's about awareness," Gardner said. "Sometimes people don't know what they don't know. It's important for us to share the RV industry's advocacy priorities with legislators, as well as how the industry benefits their constituents."

Since joining the team, RVIA said Gardner's favorite part of his new role has been meeting RVIA staff and connecting with new faces on Capitol Hill.

"Everyone at the RV Industry Association has been so friendly and helpful," he said. "Also, a big part of government affairs is introducing yourself to folks on the Hill and letting them know you're here as both an advocate and as a resource for their questions. The Hill has people from all different walks of life, and I enjoy meeting them."

When considering how the RV industry is meaningful to his own life, Gardner expressed his passion for adventuring.

"I love to be outdoors, and RVs are the gateway to that. They're a central part of exploring and seeing new parts of the country. Especially with my background, that's super meaningful to me."

Save the Date for RVDA's 2024 Con/Expo

The 2024 RV Dealers Convention/Expo is set for Nov. 11-15 at Paris Las Vegas, and presented by RVDA of U.S., RVDA of Canada and the Mike Molino RV Learning Center.

The annual RVDA Convention/Expo brings together dealers, manufacturers, suppliers and RV industry business partners for the premier dealer education and networking event of the year.

The education program will provide segmented content based on dealership size, management structure and revenue in addition to focusing on things dealers have in common. The RVDA Convention/Expo Committee and staff are working to bring dealers relevant educational content and networking opportunities.

Exhibitor-led Vendor Training +Plus sessions will be an important part of the event as well as dealer-manufacturer Partners in Progress meetings.

Dealers will be notified when registration opens. Regular updates will be posted on the convention website, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X, formerly known as Twitter.

Companies interested in partnership, sponsorship, exhibiting and Vendor Training +Plus opportunities can contact Julie Newhouse at (703) 364-5518 or send an email to jnewhouse@rvda.org.

Keep an eye out for more information on RV PRO's 40 Under 40 award ceremony, which will take place during the convention.

'RVs Move America Week' Slated for June

The annual RVs Move America Week is scheduled for Sunday through Thursday, June 2-6, in Washington, D.C., at The Mayflower Hotel Autograph Collection.

The event begins with two days of committee meetings, where volunteers from across the RV industry collectively work to build a strategic roadmap to help define future growth of the $140 billion dollar RV industry. In addition to committee meetings, participants will gain insight on the state of the RV industry from association leaders and on the policies of the administration from political speakers, the RV Industry Association (RVIA) said. Attendees will rub elbows with federal policymakers and industry innovators, forging relationships beneficial to the future growth of the RV market.

"As the impact of RV industry continues to grow, its influence in Washington is vital for the future success of the industry," the association said. "It's more important than ever to make your voice heard and advocate for the federal reforms our industry needs to truly thrive. We encourage every member to participate in these efforts and join us in our nation's capital!"

The event schedule is now available. Check rvia.org/events/rvs-move-america-week for registration information.

Dutchmen Welcomes Aaron Young as New President


Young

Dutchmen, a manufacturer of towable RVs and a division of Keystone RV, announced the appointment of Aaron Young as the company's new president, effective Feb. 12.

Young will spearhead Dutchmen's sales organization, leveraging his extensive experience and insights to bolster the company's market presence and strengthen relationships with dealers. With a career spanning decades in the RV industry, Young brings invaluable knowledge and a proven track record of success to his leadership position, the company said.

"Aaron's deep understanding of Dutchmen's history and background, coupled with his significant contributions as general manager overseeing the Kodiak and Aspen Trail brands, uniquely positions him to lead our company forward," said Jeff Runels, president of Keystone RV. "We are confident that under Aaron's guidance, Dutchmen will continue to thrive and exceed expectations in the competitive RV market."

Young expressed his enthusiasm for returning to Dutchmen.

"I'm thrilled to continue my career and be home. Working with a solid team and delivering strong results for our organization and dealer partners will be our primary focus," he said.

PATRICK



EMPOWERING ENTHUSIASTS

Patrick's full solutions model sets a new standard for RV manufacturing. Our network of leading brands represent America's largest selection of interior and exterior component solutions. From expert design consultation to dedicated customer service, we empower our customers to achieve more.

Scan to explore RV solutions

Contact Patrick's design studio for a free consultation.
design@patrickind.com

ADORN · AIA · ALPHA SYSTEMS · AMC MSM · BETTERWAY PRODUCTS · CHARLESTON · Collins & Company · DECOR

DEHCO · FRONTLINE MANUFACTURING · FOREMOST · FUSION WOOD PRODUCTS · Gravure Ink · INDIANA TRANSPORT · INLAND Plywood Company · Interior Components Plus

KRA International · LaSalle Bristol · LMI · LS Manufacturing · MAPLE CITY · MEDALLION PLASTICS · Middlebury Hardwood Products · Nickell Moulding Company

North American Forest Products · North American MOULDING · Parkland Plastics · PATRICK Distribution · Premier Concepts · THE PROGRESSIVE GROUP · QAV · Precision Painting

REVEL PRODUCTS INC · Rockford Fosgate · SIGMA WIRE INTERNATIONAL · Structural Composites of Indiana · SYNERGY RV TRANSPORT · TRANSHIELD · Williamsburg Furniture Inc. · Wire Design

Having started in the RV industry on the production line, Young demonstrated exceptional leadership and dedication, swiftly rising through the ranks to assume roles of increasing responsibility. His tenure as district sales manager and subsequent promotion to general manager underscore his unwavering commitment to driving growth and innovation within the company, Dutchmen said.

Following his decade-long tenure with Dutchmen, Young ventured into the realm of RV dealership management in 2023, where he further honed his strategic acumen and customer-centric approach. Now, equipped with a wealth of experience and a renewed sense of purpose, Young returns to Dutchmen poised to lead the company into its next phase of evolution.

The appointment of Young as president marks an exciting chapter in Dutchmen's storied history, signaling the company's unwavering commitment to excellence and innovation in the RV industry.

Heartland Promotes Roberts to Director of Quality Control



Roberts

Heartland RV announced that Anthony Roberts has been promoted to the role of director of quality control for Heartland, Cruiser RV (CRV) and DRV, effective Feb. 5.

Roberts brings a wealth of experience and a proven track record of success to the table, having consistently demonstrated his ability to elevate quality standards, the OEM said. In collaboration with President Kyle Kwasny, Roberts will spearhead the quality control department, directly aligning with Heartland RV's mission to lead the industry not just in product, but in customer satisfaction, reliability and quality, the company said.

"Our confidence in Anthony's leadership is matched by our investment in the future of manufacturing excellence," Kwasny said.

November 2023 marked the opening of Heartland's assembly plant. Boasting 144,000 square feet, the facility is a testament to innovation, featuring an efficient assembly line augmented by advanced technology and 40 stations, including 34 for assembly and six for pre-delivery inspection, Heartland said.

The plant's design is a physical manifestation of Heartland's lean manufacturing goals.

"We've built manufacturing flexibility, capabilities and repeatability into the plant's DNA, reducing waste and increasing flow for better quality, cost, delivery and safety," said Heartland RV's Dan Stone.

In addition to the assembly plant, in August of 2022, Heartland opened a 73,000-square-foot parts warehouse, which centralizes components for the Service Department, enhancing efficiency through cutting-edge equipment. These improvements, together with future initiatives like the iPad management system and live electronic documentation, are reshaping the way Heartland RV approaches parts delivery, the company said.

"As we welcome Anthony Roberts into his new role, we are redefining our expectations, that exceptional quality is not just anticipated, it is assured. With Anthony at the helm of our quality control and our continued advancements in manufacturing, we reaffirm our promise to deliver products that embody excellence and inspire adventure," Kwasny said. "We pride ourselves on building products with the customer in mind at Heartland RV. With a dedication to refining our processes, we continually elevate the standard of our products without compromising on quality. The result is products that are proven, smarter and simpler for campers."

THOR Commits Multiyear Support to Nonprofit Housing Agency

On Feb. 28, THOR Industries announced a multiyear commitment to support Lacasa, a nonprofit housing agency offering programs to help Indiana's Elkhart County community members achieve financial stability.

The commitment, which includes significant financial support and employee volunteer projects over the next five years, supports Lacasa's programs which are focused on historically under-served communities and designed to create opportunity for personal empowerment, family stability and neighborhood vitality. The announcement illustrates THOR's steadfast support of the Elkhart community where they are headquartered and where nearly 10,000 team members live, work and play throughout the THOR family of companies, the company said.

"By teaming up with Lacasa, THOR Industries is showing how big businesses and community advocates can do great things together," shared Jeremy Stutsman, Lacasa president and CEO. "It's about working side by side to make a positive impact and proving that when we collaborate, we can build a better, fairer and stronger future for everyone."

"We are grateful for our Elkhart community and honored to establish a long-term partnership with Lacasa," said THOR President and CEO Bob Martin. "Supporting education and programs to empower families to build better lives and acquire safe, affordable housing is one small way to positively impact the community that is so important to the THOR family of companies."

The announcement and check ceremony took place at THOR's global headquarters in Elkhart on Feb. 28.

Lacasa is a community housing development organization serving Elkhart County since 1970. More information can be found at www.lacasainc.net.

Patrick Industries Appoints Andy Roeder as EVP of Finance & CFO



Roeder

Patrick Industries announced that it has appointed Andy Roeder as executive vice president of finance, chief financial officer and treasurer of the company, effective March 5.

"We are delighted to announce that Andy will be joining Patrick's leadership team after a robust search process that encompassed strong candidates, both internal and external," said Andy Nemeth, CEO of Patrick. "We are excited to welcome him to the Patrick family."

Roeder commented, "I am thrilled to be joining Patrick as I take the next step in my career and look forward to contributing to the company and its leadership team as we strive together to become the supplier of choice to the outdoor enthusiast and housing markets."

GOT NEWS? Send your company news items to jbenschop@cahabamedia.com or mmoore@cahabamedia.com.

NEW
& IMPROVED!

CAMCO

tastepure®

Advanced 6-STEP Filtration Technology



CERTIFIED TO NSF/ ANSI 53 · PREMIUM KDF® 55 ACTIVATED CARBON FILTER · UNITED STATES PATENT NO. D943,705 S · COMPLIANT TO NSF/ ANSI 61 · CERTIFIED TO NSF/ ANSI 42

HEXFLOW TECHNOLOGY · CERTIFIED LEAD FREE



Updated packaging!
Camco #40043

Connect with us on social media!

www.camco.net

CAMCO

FOCUS ON

COMMUNITY

Nearly one billion people lack access to clean water. Without it, education cannot thrive, gender inequality grows, economic activity becomes stagnant and development is stifled. RELiON Battery is helping to support this cause through a new partnership with Well Aware – a nonprofit committed to implementing clean water systems in East Africa. The partnership will allow RELiON to fund the creation of a well at Mummandu Health Centre, a vital pillar of the community serving nearly 70 patients every day. Mummandu Health Centre is unique in the region, featuring maternity wards that cater to expectant mothers throughout every stage of pregnancy.



How did the RELiON x Well Aware partnership start?

Water scarcity and contamination is a global crisis affecting billions. In learning about Well Aware's commitment to building reliable, long-lasting water sources, we felt compelled to assist in their efforts. There is a ripple effect of impact when clean water is available in the communities where Well Aware projects occur. Students can stay in school, parents can earn income and contribute to the local economy, disease rates drop and lives are transformed. RELiON first partnered with Well Aware in 2022 to help fund a rainwater catchment and UV purification system at Kwakatheke Primary School in Machakos County, Kenya. The project was completed in February 2023 and has impacted more than 3,000 lives with lasting clean water.



When will the Mummandu Health Centre well be completed?

The Mummandu Health Centre well is scheduled for completion this August.

How does RELiON choose the nonprofits/organizations it works with?

We partner with organizations across the globe that share our passion and desire to bring solar energy and clean water to regions that need it most. Our motto, "Challenge Your Limits," reflects our philosophy to push yourself to greatness. We, along with our customers, live and breathe adventure and relish the opportunities that our planet provides. As such, we want to work with nonprofits and organizations that share that philosophy. RELiON has partnered with more than 15 nonprofit organizations focusing on issues such as renewable energy, food security and ocean conservation. Some highlights include providing 6,700 people with clean water for 10 years with Wine to Water, recovering over 1.05 million pounds of surplus produce with Food Forward, and training 70 female entrepreneurs every 15 months through the Kula Project.

Why does the company feel this work is important?

Well Aware is helping solve a crucial issue. Funding and implementing clean water systems drives development and empowers communities. We admire their commitment to building reliable, long-lasting water sources that will not fail, and will continue to provide Clean Water for Life – enabling entire communities and future generations to thrive, grow and develop. We are proud to support such an important initiative. So far, Well Aware has built 120 water systems with a 100% success rate, impacting over 525,000 lives and increasing education rates by 34%. RVP

RV PRO would like to highlight the philanthropic efforts of industry companies and dealerships. Please send us 500 words about your company's volunteer work and programs for a chance to be featured in future issues! Email Managing Editor Jordan Benschop: jbenschop@cahabamedia.com.

MAKE IT MODULAR

A Brand New Way To Install Your RV Shower





Back & side wall panels are trimmable to the appropriate width & depth.



Panels fit into specially designed flanges on corner components to complete the surround.



More surrounds available for Neo-Angle Showers and Bathtubs.

Find these shower solutions and more at IconDirect.com or call us at 1-888-362-4266

Your Source for Aftermarket RV Parts FAST

DOUBLING DOWN

Alliance RV's newest double-axle takes the company's fifth wheel focus to a lineup of floorplans for every type of weekend warrior.

BY DARIAN ARMER

> **"We're making our RVs convenient and functional. We've challenged the design and thought of everything."**

Brothers Ryan and Coley Brady set out to make not only a better RV, but a better RV company, when they launched Alliance RV in 2019.

Ryan and Coley both had fairly long tenures working for another RV manufacturer when they decided to branch out and form the Elkhart, Indiana-based company.

"We had a great run there and enjoyed our time, but came to the realization that the industry was ripe for some change. We set off in 2019 to do just that," Ryan says. "We wanted to change the way RVs were designed and the thought process through the design phase of an RV. We also wanted to change the ownership experience for the end retail customer and provide a better one."

The brothers assembled what they feel is a best-in-class management team with excellent track records in the industry.

"We gathered an array of people who worked for different manufacturers to get different perspectives in the mix. Through social media channels, talking to dealers and customers, we really crowd-sourced our first model, the Paradigm," Ryan says. "It was a nine-month process of drilling down and addressing pain points with retail customers."





The Delta's design focuses on a weekend warrior type of camper whose time is at a premium.



The Paradigm came out in the fall of 2019 as a luxury fifth wheel with innovative features that propelled growth early on, Ryan says.

"We got the product out, saw that is was resonating with customers and that they were finding value in what we were doing," Ryan says. "Then COVID hit and threw a wrench in things."

Even with that wrench, Ryan says they've built about 15,000 RVs since 2020. That's largely been fifth wheels since travel trailers didn't hit the lineup until recently.

Fast forward to 2023 and Alliance RV's newest product: the Delta double-axle travel trailer.

"We stayed true to the crowd-sourcing model of designing our RVs rather than guessing what features, components and design people want. We pore over YouTube videos and social media. We attend shows and visit campgrounds," Ryan says.

Delta Product Manager Eric Bailey says they took the same approach with the Delta product line as they did with their fifth wheel lineup. Bailey came on board with Alliance RV about one year before the Delta product was launched. This allowed the company to do more in-depth crowd-sourcing from real-time users.



"I spent the better part of six months just talking with customers, conducting Zoom calls, having one-on-ones at shows and calls and getting to the root of our buyer," Bailey says. "We found the Delta buyer is the camper that's a weekend warrior. With the amount of research we did, we got a lot of variety of feedback on sizes and price point. A lot of features you'll see on Deltas today have to do with storage. We heard from people wanting more storage in a unit. It's important to them to be able to take everything with you that you want."

Since storage was such a big deal, Delta offers 62 feet of pass-through storage.

"The length and weight of the trailer was something we got good feedback on. It was where we wanted to be. It's a single slide, half-ton towable and popular with national park camping. We were able to pack in the features," Bailey says.

"We're making our RVs convenient and functional. We've challenged the design and thought of everything," Ryan says.

DREAMING UP THE DELTA

It's the big and small details that set Delta apart – such as three-way switches, dedicated space for camp tables, flip-up nightstands and more. The front cap lights can be turned on and off with a switch, and there's a dedicated space for trash.

"We have floorplans that are really deliberately designed and well thought out," Ryan says. "Prior to Delta, we were more focused on that seasonal camper. With Delta we're focusing on a more weekend-type camper whose time is at a premium. We don't want them to have to spend time figuring out their campers."

The Delta lineup currently features seven floorplans. Bailey says the four most recent floorplans are very unique.

"We innovated those to make them better than anything else you'll see in the industry," Bailey says. "Right now, we feel pretty strong with our lineup at seven floorplans. We're going to hold at seven for the time being based on their really good performance. We have something for everyone, from couple's coaches to bunk houses."

Delta floorplans sleep two to 10 people, with the 320BH floorplan sleeping the most. The bunk room alone with a slideout can sleep five people comfortably and provide a lot of storage.

"Delta has a modern look that appeals to the majority of the crowd. Some of the features that we do we decided to make standard on Delta. All our Deltas are 50-amp service, and two AC units is standard. You can run both of the AC units on 30-amp service. That's very unique and can't be done with most RVs out there," Bailey says. "The thought process with that is that the AC setup has proved itself in our fifth wheels. We wanted to carry on that success from our fifth wheel product into our travel trailers."

The Delta floorplans rethink certain areas of a camper to provide more storage. For example, under the sink is a full-size, tip out trash can. This is possible because of the side drain sink, which moves the P-trap, the P-shaped bend pipe used in drainpipes to connect the sink and septic tank, out of the way to unlock enough room under the sink to fit a full-size trash can.

"It's a lot of little details: the ease of our three-way switches, storage on the inside, redesigned kitchen bases with much deeper drawers," Bailey says.

The Delta lineup ranges from 27 to 36 feet long with an MSRP of $51,700 to $66,300.

"We've had really strong feedback. We're about six months into really getting these out on dealer's lots. We're finding at the shows that everything we've talked about and everything we've done has resonated with the customer. They've had issues and have never seen a solution like we're providing before. It sets us apart from others in the market," Bailey says. "The same goes for the reaction from dealers. They're excited to give their customers something they haven't seen before.

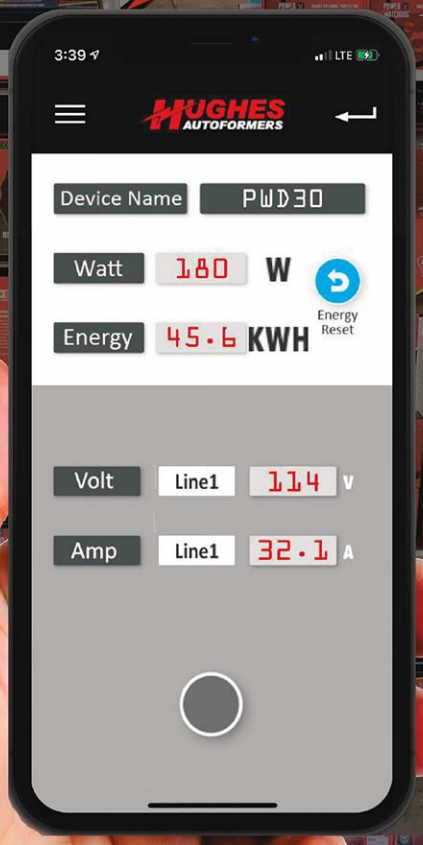
"And our approach to service is a desire to elevate the RV experience for our retail customers. It doesn't matter what you buy. These are rolling homes and there is going to be a service need at some point. If you buy one of our coaches, you're buying from a manufacturer that is transparent and going to be there for you on the back-end."

For more information on Alliance RV, visit alliancerv.com. RVP



You Don't Sell the Fastest-Growing RV Product?

Then Contact Us IMMEDIATELY!





1 (888) 540-1504

hughesautoformers.com

HUGHES AUTOFORMERS

Must-Know Camping Gear Trends

Erik Dier, sales manager at Kuma Outdoor Gear, tells us about the Canadian company and what campers are looking for.

BY JENNIFER KING

RV PRO: How did Kuma get its start and what is your company's makeup like now?

Dier: Kuma Outdoor Gear started in one of the most beautiful places on the planet – Jasper, Alberta, Canada. Jasper is like something out of a postcard, and the idea for Kuma took root during our countless adventures – hiking, biking, skiing, you name it – in this outdoor paradise. In 2014, we decided to turn our passion into something tangible. We wanted to create gear that would not only hold up to the rigors of outdoor use, but our main goal was to inspire others to get out there and soak in nature's wonders, just like we do in Jasper.

Ten years later, with team members in Edmonton and Vancouver and the support of our incredible rep team across Canada and the United States, we are sharing our love of the outdoors with our Kuma Kommunity across North America.

RV PRO: Can you tell us about the Re-Discover Project?

Dier: Over the past 10 to 15 years, we have seen an increase in campers, from all demographics, entering into the outdoors market. From affluent outdoorsmen to families on tight budgets, we've seen a wide range of price and durability in outdoor products. Although inexpensive gear makes it easier for all demographics to enter the market, we've seen major waste issues due to low durability. With mass amounts of "disposable" outdoor products heading to landfills year after year, we were determined to build products that would avoid that.

Through our "Fix It Don't Replace It" program and building durable, long-lasting products, we had taken a step in the right direction. We're sending parts to fix chairs rather than fully replacing them and building products that will last many seasons. However, we've always had this belief that there's more we can do on our sustainability journey, especially when it comes to cutting down on waste. That's why we're proud to present our latest initiative: The Re-Discover Project.

Teaming up with Katrina at Earth Warrior, a local upcycling business, we've embarked on this adventure of giving old products a new lease on life. Together with Katrina's expertise, we've created sewing patterns that allow us to repurpose returned goods like chairs, tents and even pet products. We're giving these products a new life and "Re-Discovering" how we can continue the circulation of these would-be discarded materials.

Our goal is "Nothing goes to waste!" Every component of the original item has a purpose. From the straps and buckles to the fabric and stuffing, we recycle or utilize every piece, recreating "new" items that our Kuma Kommunity can enjoy and use again.

RV PRO: What products are campers looking for right now? What's trending?

Dier: Recently, we've noticed a significant uptick in interest for two specific product lines. Leading the charge are heated chairs – perfect for those chilly outdoor hangouts or cozy campfire sessions. Plus, they're a hit at kids' sports events and appeal to







tech-savvy campers. Last year, we rolled out our Switchback Heated Chair with Bluetooth technology, and this year, all our heated chairs, including the Lazy Bear Chair and Double Bear Buddy Chair, will be equipped with this technology. Kuma is the first company to introduce this technology in a heated chair.

On top of that we've noticed a trend of camping with pets, especially dogs. They're part of the family, right? That's why we've got a full line of pet gear that includes our Lazy Bear Dog Beds to keep your dogs comfy after a day of adventure. People love matching their pet's gear with their own, so we've put together collars and leash sets that perfectly complement our camp chairs. Now, every camping trip is not just an adventure but a stylish outing for both humans and their furry buddies!

RV PRO: How do you decide what products to put in your collections? How do you do your market research?

Dier: Much of our market research revolves around understanding how our Kuma Kommunity uses their gear and pinpointing what additions would enhance their outdoor experiences, keeping them out there longer. We have also found it important to offer a blend of timeless designs, such as our iconic Red Plaid Collection, alongside dynamic and lively color palettes like our Backtrack Collection.

We are constantly engaging directly with our community through social media interactions, in-person events and visiting our retailers to gather insights into our customers preferences and needs. By staying closely connected with our Kuma Kommunity, we're able to tailor our product offerings to match their need for gear that allows them to spend more time outdoors.

RV PRO: Why do you feel camping is on the rise – what are people looking for that camping fulfills?

Dier: People are craving a connection with nature, and camping is a great way for a wide variety of outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy it. It's not just about packing up a sleeping bag and pitching a tent on the hard ground anymore; it's about finding your camping style and spending more time enjoying the outdoors in a way that fits your lifestyle and comfort levels.

Camping offers a break from the hustle and bustle of daily life, allowing people to unwind and recharge surrounded by natural beauty. Plus, there's something truly special about gathering around a campfire with friends and family, sharing stories or songs under the stars. So, we feel people are turning to camping as a way to fulfill their need for adventure, relaxation and genuine connection with the world around them.

RV PRO: When RV dealers send their customers out on an RV trip for the first time, what are some must-have camping products they should recommend their customers buy?

Dier: We firmly believe that comfort acts as a catalyst for outdoor exploration. A comfortable first outdoor experience with their new RV will allow them to enjoy their time more, therefore wanting to spend more time camping. To truly enhance their outdoor experience, we think it is important to understand the unique preferences of the customer. This insight allows you to recommend gear tailored to their specific needs.

For example, a customer that prioritizes being warm might be recommended to check out a heated chair, ensuring warmth and relaxation during chilly evenings under the stars. Some may place a premium on protection from the elements and pesky bugs, making products like our Bear Den Deluxe Gazebo indispensable for creating a sheltered oasis amid nature. Others will prioritize having organizational solutions like our Busy Bear Camp Kitchen on hand to keep essentials easily accessible and neatly arranged.

For new RV enthusiasts, we suggest investing in high-quality RV mats. These mats effortlessly bridge the gap between indoor comfort and outdoor spaces, fostering a welcoming environment that beckons people to spend extended periods outdoors. With these products, you can provide customers the gear to balance between indoor coziness and outdoor adventure, ultimately encouraging them to embark on longer and more frequent camping trips. RVP



PIONEERING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Walex shows its dedication to sustainability by introducing recycle-ready packaging and adopting solar power in its manufacturing plant.

BY RONNIE WENDT



With the growing emphasis on environmental consciousness, companies are increasingly prioritizing sustainability and striving to decrease their carbon footprint.

Walex, a key supplier in the RV and marine industries, is one such trailblazer. The 37-year-old company produces deodorizers, treatments and portable sanitation products and stands at the forefront of RV industry sustainability efforts.

Walex was established by the late Bob Williams and his son, Bill Williams, as a small, family-run operation supplying the commercial sanitation industry. Over time, the Wilmington, North Carolina, company expanded its reach and product offerings to the RV, marine, janitorial, train, plane and bus markets. Today, the company employs over 70 people, distributes to over 50 countries and is a prominent player in many industries.

Product reach aside, Walex's commitment to sustainability is also palpable. Putting environmental responsibility first is at the core of everything Walex does.

"It's very important to us to help with the environment and do our part," says Tony Butler, sales manager for the Walex RV, marine and transportation division.

To promote greater sustainability, the company has launched recycle-ready packaging on multiple products, aiming for universal implementation across all product lines. The equipment at its manufacturing plant will soon operate solely on solar power, contributing to a greener environment.

"We will continue to add new sustainability measures in the future," Butler adds. "It is important for us to be good stewards of the environment. We are a consumable product. Packaging for the products we produce could end up in a landfill. Our goal is to, at the very least, give our customers an opportunity to recycle if they wish to do so."

The company's efforts are getting noticed. Its environmental focus, quality products and customer service helped it win the 2023 RV Industry Association Supplier of the Year award.

Thursday
May 2, 2024
1 p.m. CT

RV PRO webinar



Make Customers *Happier* With Their RV Service Experience

Are your customers happy with their service experience? Are you sure?

Learn how to navigate the chaos, enhance customer experience and leverage solutions critical for the success of your service department.

Buckle up for a lively and interactive conversation between our dynamic hosts as they share their thoughts, swap stories, and unravel solutions to navigate the chaotic world of RV service. Learn how to enhance transparency in the customer experience and reveal those innovative solutions you never knew you needed. This friendly chat will be packed with insights to make your RV service journey a smoother, more enjoyable ride for you and your customer.



Bryan Tierney, Sales Solutions Consultant

When Bryan thinks back on his childhood, some of his fondest memories are the Saturdays he spent with his dad at the local motorcycle shop. As he got older, Bryan's love for the powersports industry continued to evolve. He landed a job behind the parts counter of that very same dealership and started his career using Lightspeed. Now, 30 years later, Bryan's role with Lightspeed has changed many times, but the feeling he gets when he's in a dealership or at an industry event, always takes him back to those Saturdays with his dad.



Brad Lloyd, Sales Account Executive

Brad has been with Lightspeed for over 20 years, and in his role as sales account executive in the RV division, he gets the opportunity to show recreational industry dealerships how Lightspeed can transform their business. Brad works with hundreds of RV, trailer, powersports, and marine dealers across the country, guiding them through the process of upgrading to a DMS. It's a complex process, but he finds it incredibly rewarding. An added bonus to his current role is that Brad gets to travel all over the country. He recently purchased a new 2022 Shadow Cruiser travel trailer, so now he spends most of his time on the road, experiencing the lifestyle that he promotes.

Sponsored by

LIGHTSPEED

REGISTER AT RV-PRO.COM/WEBINARS

The company also beat out 323 entries for the 2023 Silver Achievement Award from the Flexible Packaging Association for its Walex Commando Black Holding Tank Cleaner recyclable pouch.

Environmentally Friendly Packaging

DaRon Jacobs, plant manager of manufacturing at Walex, says the company's mantra is "Do the right thing." This mantra translates into keeping Walex's commitment to sustainability, with introducing recyclable packaging.

The company launched its first "recycle-ready" packaging in 2019, specifically for Bio-Active septic tank treatment products for home septic systems. The packaging, consisting of a special pouch, is recyclable at plastic bag recycling facilities, like the ones found at grocery stores.

Walex has since extended its recycle-ready packaging to six products sold in Canada – the Porta-Pak Fresh, Porta-Pak Lavender, Bio-Pak Alpine Fresh, Bio-Pak Tropical Breeze, Elemonate and Commando. The company will introduce more products – Porta-Pak Clean Linen and Bio-Pak Ocean Mist – in the next two months.

"We started with Canada because it's a much smaller market and a good way for us to test how the products hold up in real-life situations," Butler says. "They've done extremely well and have been very well received by distributors, dealerships and consumers."

The company also offers two recycle-ready products in the United States — Bio-Active Septic Tank Treatment and Commando.

Recyclable packaging development has been challenging, due to the complicated nature of the product chemistries, Jacobs notes. He explains that the company's two chemists had to acquire resource materials and test products in use in the laboratory.

According to Jacobs, Walex evaluates products and packaging performance with comprehensive accelerated oven testing. "We monitor weight variations, packaging appearance and fragrance



Tony Butler



DaRon Jacobs

strength to better understand how contents interact with the pouch material at high temperatures as well as when exposed for prolonged periods in less extreme conditions," he says. "This rigorous testing enables Walex to supply products that meet customers' needs in the long term."

The resulting package is better than a rigid high-density polyethylene (HDPE) canister, Butler says. Production of a store drop-off recyclable zipper pouch uses up to 7% less plastic, consumes around 65% less water, produces 79% less carbon dioxide emissions, uses about 78% less fossil fuel during transportation and contributes to approximately 74% less landfill waste.

Another challenge of recyclable packaging is making sure customers recycle, Butler adds. The company marked the front of the package with the How2Recycle seal to encourage correct disposal. How2Recycle aims to simplify recycling by standardizing instructions and labels.

"The front of the package is an area typically reserved exclusively for branding, while promotional content, instructions and labels are usually displayed on the back," Butler says. "Putting this information on the front significantly enhances recycling awareness among consumers."

Walex's packaging is marked as store drop-off, informing consumers to recycle it at local plastic bag recycling bins found at most retail stores. Consumers just need to ensure the package is clean and dry before putting it in the bin.

According to Butler, materials recycled in this way are made into various products, including Trex composite boards for decks and park benches. Eventually, all Walex products will use recycle-ready packaging.

"[Before that happens,] we want to test it in the real-world environment a little longer," Butler adds. "There are always fresh developments and products coming out, and we are always looking to improve our products. So, we are taking our time. But our long-term goal is to have most of our products in recycle-ready packaging – at least in the consumer market."

Solar Power: Saving Money & the Environment

Walex's commitment to sustainability





doesn't stop at packaging. The company is actively pursuing solar power as a renewable energy source, Butler says.

"Solar is very expensive," Butler explains. "We had discussed it for many years but have never bitten the bullet. However, the Department of Agriculture has Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grants available for renewable energy, and we were able to take advantage of a REAP grant to cover 40% of the costs."

Jacobs explains the grant program improves energy efficiency through renewable energy investments among agricultural producers and rural small businesses. This funding helps businesses reduce energy costs, create additional revenue streams and enhance the resilience of their operations.

With the grant in hand, Walex partnered with Cape Fear Solar Systems, a full-service installer of solar panels and solar projects, to install a 300-kilowatt solar power system on the roof of its 65,000-square-foot manufacturing facility.

"They are installing 659 solar panels on the roof, which will cover approximately 70% of the roof," Jacobs says. "The 300-kilowatt system will cover almost 70% of our power usage and 100% of the power needs of our production equipment."

Walex's solar project, started in 2021, is nearing completion and will significantly decrease its reliance on conventional energy sources. Butler underscores this project is a testament to Walex's commitment to sustainability.

Walex will use the electricity savings to lease Crown battery-powered forklifts, replacing its propane-powered fleet. "We are dumping the money we save with solar power into forklifts to eliminate our carbon footprint there," Jacobs says. "The ROI for the solar investment is roughly three years."

The Future

Walex plans to continue reducing its carbon footprint with further sustainability efforts, Jacobs says.

The company may add more green solutions to the current facility and the planned 20,000-square-foot facility being constructed on 3 acres of land near the current facility, he says.

"This expansion highlights [Walex]'s commitment to renewable energy but also its continuous growth and development as a leading player in the RV and marine industry," Butler adds.

Recommendations for Sustainability

For other companies looking to embrace sustainability, Butler and Jacobs stress the importance of thorough research and finding the right partners.

"We had more interviews with energy partners than we did for our packaging efforts," Jacobs says. "We were very fortunate to find an excellent partner in Cape Fear Solar Systems."

On the packaging side, they emphasize the importance of understanding consumers' environmental concerns and preferences. By offering eco-conscious products and packaging, companies can cater to the growing demand for sustainable solutions, Butler concludes.

"Consumers in the outdoor industry are more likely to be concerned about the environment. They care about keeping the environment clean and picking up their trash," he says. "The newer generation of RVers are even more environmentally conscious. They are well educated on the types and ways of recycling. Focusing on the needs of that demographic of consumers is important."

Walex's eco-consciousness journey serves as an inspiring example for companies looking to prioritize sustainability. With environmentally friendly packaging and a transition to solar power, Walex has set new standards for responsible business practices in the RV and marine industry. The company is reducing its environmental impact while shaping a brighter and greener future for all. RVP





THE NEXT MOVE IN SUSTAINABILITY: MAKING THE SWITCH TO LITHIUM

Consider moving to an RV energy solution that's beneficial for the user and the environment.

BY DRAGONFLY ENERGY



Moving toward sustainability in the RV manufacturing industry is widely accepted as a nonnegotiable. The industry must continue to make moves toward greener, more environmentally friendly initiatives to stay relevant and entice buyers. Today's RV buyers are seeking companies with sustainable products and practices more than ever before.

There are many ways RV manufacturers can incorporate sustainability into their businesses, from integrating eco-friendly building materials, to reducing environmental impact during the manufacturing process, and using responsible waste reduction and recycling programs. These efforts help decrease the overall environmental impact – but there is one thing they're missing: a direct customer benefit.

In addition to sustainability, customers are looking for luxuries in their RVs. Upgrades, improvements – anything that makes life on the road or off the grid a little more like home, as ironic as that is. One solution that provides both a significant improvement to sustainability and customer experience: lithium-ion batteries.

Lead-Acid Battery Concerns

Lead-acid batteries have been part of our lives for so long, it can be easy to forget how terrible lead is for not only our environment but also our bodies. Lead is a highly toxic metal, and it's responsible for roughly 900,000 deaths annually across the globe. Worldwide, an estimated 33% of children suffer from lead poisoning.

The majority of the global consumption of lead (85%) is for the production of lead-acid batteries. The inclusion of this toxic metal makes these batteries difficult to dispose of in a safe way. Batteries thrown into a landfill can corrode, leaching lead and lead-contaminated sulfuric acid into the environment. This can cause lead contamination via the groundwater, into bodies of water where it threatens aquatic life, into the soil and then blown into the wind, or even into the air. While it is illegal in most states to dispose of lead-acid batteries, often unregulated and informal recycling programs can become a problem and result in environmental contamination.

It's hard to say exactly how much environmental contamination a single lead-acid battery could cause, and it depends on several factors:

- How the battery was disposed
- The efficacy of the recycling practices
- The specific battery type and its condition (older batteries or one with a leak would threaten a higher level of contamination)
- The soil and environmental conditions of where the battery is disposed

However, in 2010, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimated that 3.6 million tons of lead were emitted globally that year alone, with 65% of that linked to waste



management and recycling of lead-acid batteries.

While several countries have implemented regulations on lead-acid batteries and their disposal, and recycling facilities are doing their part to improve emission controls and reduce contamination, there are things that the public can do to help mitigate the amount of lead contamination in our environment. Awareness of responsible battery disposal is a good first step, but we need to reduce our reliance on lead-acid batteries as a whole. If we can eradicate the use of this toxic metal in our daily lives, we will reduce the amount of lead poisoning and create a safer, healthier environment.

By replacing lead-acid batteries with lithium batteries, OEMs are giving customers a sustainable, environmentally friendly way to enjoy their new rig with extended power solutions. This enables customers to stay off the grid longer, use more power without interruption and feel good knowing it's better for the environment.



The Upside to Lithium

Lithium batteries are nontoxic and safer for both the user and the environment. They don't emit harmful gases, and they're more stable than lead batteries, reducing the risk of fire. In addition to being nontoxic, lithium batteries are a green power solution for several other reasons. Lithium batteries are up to five times more energy dense than lead-acid batteries, meaning they can power an RV's needs for longer, taking customers farther in their adventures. Compared to lead-acid batteries, lithium batteries are lightweight, lessening the weight of a vehicle or towable and, therefore, reducing fuel consumption.

Fuel consumption and emissions are also reduced with the lack of need for a generator. Lithium-ion batteries provide enough power for customers to live and play comfortably off battery power with up to three times the power than a traditional lead-acid battery. The use of lithium also promotes the use of renewable energy, as solar panels attached to the roof of the rig can provide battery charging as needed. With this power supply, generators are no longer needed, reducing fuel and emissions as well as providing a quieter escape to nature.

When it comes to battery replacement, lithium battery owners often find that an investment in a lithium power system is well worth it. Instead of buying batteries every few years, properly cared for lithium batteries can last 10 years or longer. This reduces waste significantly, as well as shipping and other environmental factors required in replacing batteries. When it does come time to replace a lithium battery, innovations in lithium recycling have seen companies like Redwood Materials and Aqua Metals capable of extracting the minerals in a form that is pure enough to be put back into the production of new batteries. This creates an even more sustainable product and process, reducing waste and reusing materials.

Dragonfly Energy, maker of Battle Born Batteries, is a U.S.-based lithium battery manufacturer that designs and assembles LiFePO4 battery packs at their Reno, Nevada, facility. With a patented process for cell manufacturing, the company will soon produce American-made lithium battery cells and further reduce a reliance on overseas imports for the battery industry. This process not only allows the company to build batteries in a smaller footprint, decreasing energy consumption and environmental impact, but it also removes the use of toxic solvents and emissions.

The transition to lithium power is quickly gaining momentum, and it's easy to see why. Customers love the benefits of a lithium power system, as well as knowing they are doing their small part in reducing their carbon footprint.

It's a win for OEMs, too, which are then able to tout eco-friendly options to an audience that is on the hunt for exactly that.

The future of the RV industry is going green, and lithium batteries are the path forward.

For more about Dragonfly Energy, visit dragonflyenergy.com. RVP



WHY SUSTAINABILITY REPORTS MATTER

Hear from **THOR Industries, Patrick Industries and REV Group** on what key points they report on each year, and why those factors matter in being a good steward not just of the environment, but of their employees and community.

BY JENNIFER KING

> **"We know the journey is long, but it's worth it, and we will continue to focus on our products, our people, and our communities as we build for the future and lead our industry down the path of creating a better outdoors for generations to come."**
>
> **Bob Martin, President & CEO, THOR Industries**

Sustainability reporting has become a popular way for companies to measure annual performance goals and meet standards often set on a global basis. In the pages ahead, we take a high-level look at sustainability reports from three RV industry companies: THOR Industries, Patrick Industries and REV Group.

It's important to note that each company has different measurements it includes in its reporting. In fact, this is common in businesses worldwide. A Harvard Business Review article from 2022 found that with a variety of reporting options available, companies can choose a narrow scope on which to report (focusing on greenhouse gas emissions, for example), or a broader range such as goals associated with Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) or the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The three companies on the following pages chose to focus on a wider variety of topics in addition to environmental aspects. Those topics include employee safety, diversity and inclusion, philanthropy and more.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines "sustainable manufacturing" as: "the creation of manufactured products through economically sounds processes that minimize negative environmental impacts while conserving energy and natural resources." The agency goes on to say that "sustainable manufacturing enhances employee, community and product safety," and cites the following as reasons why companies are pursuing sustainability:

- increase operational efficiency by reducing costs and waste
- respond to or reach new customers and increase competitive advantage
- protect and strengthen brand and reputation while building public trust
- build long-term business viability and success
- respond to regulatory constraints and opportunities

The companies featured here – as well as many others in the RV industry – see the value in these reports as a way to communicate with customers and investors what is most important. As found in a Deloitte survey, the "2021

Climate Check – Business' views on environmental sustainability," almost half of the 750 executives surveyed said their environmental sustainability initiatives measurably boosted their corporate financial performance.

Get to know some of these measurements, examples of success and learn why a sustainability report can broaden your understanding of who you do business with.

THOR Industries

Founded in 1980
Headquarters: Elkhart, Indiana
$11.2 billion net sales
Approximately 24,900 employees
**Sustainability report based on fiscal year ending July 31, 2023*

In 2023, THOR provided its first-ever disclosures in accordance with the task force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures, the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board metrics, and the Global Reporting Initiative standards.

THOR also embarked on comprehensive screening of Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions, and continues its goal to become carbon net-neutral by 2050 with a target of 50% reduction in Scope 1 and Scope 2 GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions by 2030.

In 2023, THOR's sustainability reporting expanded to include Scope 3 emissions, and in October 2023, the company's targets were approved by the Science Based Targets initiative.

THOR has aligned its sustainability priorities with United Nations Global Compact's Sustainable Development Goals with a target of building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation.

Those goals include:

Social

- To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Environmental

- To take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- To ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Innovation example from THOR: ***F.A. Porsche Concept Travel Trailer*** – the "garagable" travel trailer has an automatic suspension that allows the



THOR has aligned its sustainability priorities with United Nations Global Compact's Sustainable Development Goals.

THOR INDUSTRIES Q&A

With **Sandy Rynalski,** THOR Industries Vice President Environmental, Social and Governance



RV PRO: Tell me about THOR's work with the RV Industry Association's new Sustainability Committee?
Rynalski: Sustainability is essential to the long-term enjoyment of the lifestyle that our industry makes possible. Our industry is full of companies that have embraced environmentally friendly practices well before sustainability became the focus for corporate America that it is today. Whether it's Scope 1, Scope 2 or Scope 3 greenhouse gas emission reduction programs or even supplier partnering, there is so much that we can benefit from a common understanding of what the obligations, legally and socially, are that RVIA members must embrace. It's important that the industry work together to meet this challenge.

RV PRO: What drives THOR each year to work on sustainability goals? How and when are those goals set each year?
Rynalski: It's hard to imagine an industry where sustainability is more crucial than it is to the recreational vehicle industry. At THOR, we've not only accepted the challenge to drive to better sustainability practices but have embraced it as part of our strategy. Our strategies are set by our COO, our vice president of sustainability and our Sustainability Committee, which is composed of members from each of our operating companies.

RV PRO: THOR takes it a step further than some companies in the RV industry with its Carbon & Climate questionnaire – how does this help THOR with its goals?
Rynalski: Understanding where we are on our sustainability journey demands that we stay aware of the standards that exist in the area of sustainability. The questionnaire is just one of many steps that we take to constantly assess our position and our progress. Understanding this is essential to meaningful goal setting.

RV PRO: Why is it important for THOR to be named one of Newsweek's "America's Most Responsible Companies" and "America's Most Trustworthy Companies"?
Rynalski: How you do business and the example you set is important to a company like THOR. Our team members, our communities and the environment are all impacted by how we operate as a company. Being mindful of this and driving strategies to positively impact all our constituents is an important element of our long-term success. It's not only who we are as a company, but it's also who we want to be, so we are all striving to be better.






Creating and maintaining a proactive safety approach is a priority for Patrick Industries.

chassis height to be adjusted to reduce aerodynamic drag; ideal for internal combustion engine (ICE) tow vehicles and EV (electric vehicles).

Social responsibility examples include:
Family Bonding Program – an expanded paid parental leave and financial assistance program for birth or adoption.
Safety Gemba Walks – occurring monthly, the walks take place with the safety committee and an on-site industrial athletic trainer and focuses on work processes and ergonomics.

Carbon & Climate examples include:
Solar Power – solar panels encompass a total of 6.7 acres at U.S. operating companies. Also, several "operating companies generate enough solar power during the summer months to offset electricity usage in winter months."
Biomass heating at European facilities – burning wood, plants and other organic matter results in generating process heat, building heat and hot water.
Cleer Vision Glass Recycling – scrap glass is sold to a third-party recycler; the operation achieves a 92% recycling rate.

THOR Industries has saved the equivalent of 42 kWh of electricity and prevented the release of 7.5 pounds of air pollutants. The company has a number of committees in place that support its sustainability goals, including:
Environmental, Social, Governance & Nomination Committee (ESGN) – four independent directors who provide direction and oversight of THOR's sustainability efforts.
S***ustainability Committee*** – senior management and VP of ESG "provides operational leadership among the THOR family of companies, helping our companies identify sustainability-related risks and opportunities, establishing consistent metrics to enable meaningful measurement and coordinating the collection of data to enable consistent reporting."
Audit committee – four independent directors who focus on key business and operational risks and facilitate identification, measurement, mitigation and reporting of risks.
Compensation Committee – four directors who oversee and approve compensation and incentive plans for members of senior management.

Patrick Industries

Founded in 1959
Headquarters: Elkhart, Indiana
$3.9 billion in revenue
Approximately 10,000 employees
**Sustainability report covers 2023*

In 2020, Patrick established its ESG Committee, and now, in its 65th year in business, the company says it is focused on creating a sustainable future built on a skilled, healthy and empowered workforce. The company is prepared to do this with safety protocols, wellness programs, professional development, charitable giving and more, according to Patrick's sustainability report.

Patrick Industries made headways in its digital journey in 2023, migrating to cloud-based solutions. The company said integrating new technologies has led to the ability to "emphasize collaboration, streamline processes

and boost operational efficiency."

In addition to bolstering teamwork, Patrick reports that the newly adapted technologies have also helped with:

- Managing projects effectively
- Providing data for decision-making
- Engaging with workforce and customers

Creating and maintaining a proactive safety approach was a priority in Patrick's sustainability reporting. This included:

1. Continuous risk mitigation
2. Regulatory adherence
3. Use of advanced data systems

Patrick listed a number of initiatives and achievements in 2023, including:

1. Expanded Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) 10-hour training
2. Completed machine guarding audits with 82% corrective actions resolved
3. Introduced safety calendar and OSHA inspection toolkit
4. 3M and Demarco Solutions to streamline respiratory protection compliance
5. 36% reduction in Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR) – Sept. '23 YOY
6. Integrated Donesafe – Environmental, Health & Safety (EHS) data management system to centralize and streamline safety processes

"Our commitment to sustainability reflects our deep respect for nature and the communities of outdoor enthusiasts who find joy and inspiration there."

Andy Nemeth, CEO, Patrick Industries



REV Group's goals include an Environmental, Healthy & Safety Excellence Roadmap.

In 2023, Patrick created a Change Management Team and Project Management Office to support employees during technological evolution with guidance, standardize practices and governance, smooth transition and empower employees.

Its 2023 TACTical Training curriculum held more training, involved more business units and offered remote sessions on relationship building and developing emotional intelligence and empathy. From July 2022 to June 2023, there were a total of 6,738 leadership and development training hours.

Well-Being Initiatives

Employee Assistance Plan – offers confidential counseling, work-life balance support, and other financial, health and wellness assistance.

Fitness reimbursement and tobacco-free wellness program

Philanthropy – involved in the Care Camps Foundation, which helps children and families at medically supervised oncology camps; funded 190 grants in 2023; built 10 homes in 2023 with Habitat for Humanity; and supported LoveWay and Wellfield Botanic Gardens, plus more.

REV Group

Founded in 2006 (under a prior name)
Headquarters: Brookfield, Wisconsin
$2.64 billion in net sales
Approximately 6,700 + employees
**Sustainability report covers 2023*

Part of REV Group's sustainability report includes a Sustainability Materiality Assessment – a focus for the company's reporting. Those assessments include:

- Production & Value Creation
- Employee & Talent Management
- Local Communities
- Data Security & Privacy
- Environmental Footprint
- Environmental Compliance
- Occupational Health & Safety

REV states in its 2023 Sustainability Report that "During each step of our ESG journey, we evaluate how we are providing value to our customers and communities through our products, employees and business presence."

One major focus of the 2023 report was the company's EHS policies and Excellence Roadmap. REV carries out annual assessments, which are used to establish action plans that are overseen by an Executive EHS Committee.



> **“Our progress in people (training, veterans, DEI), products (environmental and safety), and environmental footprint (emission reduction, waste reduction, increased recycling) demonstrates our dedication to improving the communities in which we operate.”**
>
> **Mark Skonieczny Jr., President & CEO REV Group**

The company’s EHS Philosophy is as follows:

I. All workplace injuries are preventable, therefore unacceptable to our way of conducting business.

II. REV Group has the obligation to design our facilities, processes and products to protect our employees, contractors, visitors to company property and other stakeholders.

III. Every employee and contractor is responsible and accountable for workplace health and safety.

IV. Employees, contractors and visitors are expected to report, eliminate and/or safeguard against all acts and conditions detrimental to the health and safety of any individual and/or the environment.

REV GROUP Q&A

With **Paul Antonneau,** REV Group Senior Director – Environmental, Health and Safety



RV PRO: Why is a sustainability report important?
Antonneau: While climate change was the initial catalyst for the increase in Sustainability Reports, the importance of reporting on a company’s social and governance factors has increased dramatically for customers, investors and prospective employees in their decision-making. This nonfinancial monitoring of our performance year on year is an indicator of our long-term success. In addition, how a company treats their employees has greatly increased in value, from working conditions and employee morale to health initiatives and overall culture.

RV PRO: What are the touchpoints you make sure to cover each year?
Antonneau:

- Metrics including water use, waste management, energy usage and air emissions
- Product and safey innovations we’ve introduced over the past year
- Workplace health and safety
- Employee health and wellbeing
- Community involvement
- Training and education
- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Government and ethics
- Supply chain management
- Information security

RV PRO: What specifically is of note in the 2023 Sustainability Report?
Antonneau: For REV Recreation Vehicles Segment, we have shared safety innovations in our 2023 report, including Fleetwood and Holiday Rambler’s Advanced Vehicle Safety (AVS) to provide superior protection for the driver and passengers, and Renegade’s driving safety include Lane Keep Assist/Lane Departure Warning, Collision Mitigation. Our Lance Camper facility in Lancaster, California, adopted solar technology in the 1980s and has “smart buildings” that utilize natural light, metered heating and air conditioning office by office and tied into the power grid to participate in power savings programs.

RV PRO: What is REV’s sustainability strategy going forward?
Antonneau: Our sustainability strategy is to improve our operations by adding value back to our business, customers and shareholders by hiring the best people, reducing impacts on the environment and engaging in the right business practices. The REV vision, “To improve the quality of life for our customers and communities,” is foundational to our ESG strategy, providing a principled approach to our measurements, transparency and improvement actions. During each step of our ESG journey, we evaluate how we are providing value to our customers and communities through our products, employees and business presence. We continue to live the REV values, which directly support our efforts in how we execute our ESG strategy and continue to drive our environmental, social and governance commitments.

SUSTAINABILITY

ARE YOU GREEN ENOUGH?

Elkhart, Indiana-based TRA Certification helps RV manufacturers answer that question.

BY JENNIFER KING



Mandy Leazenby with Star Waggons during its TRA Certification evaluation.

You may call yourself green – but are you certified green?

There's a difference, and TRA Certification can help you earn that designation.

TRA Certification, based out of Elkhart, Indiana, works with manufacturers of RVs, park models, trailers and emergency vehicles as an independent, third-party certification service. The company, an outgrowth of parent company T.R. Arnold & Associates, which was founded in 1967, "specializes in green building and energy efficiency programs as well as ISO 9001 and ISO 14000 certifications for environmental management systems."

"There was a lot of green building talk in residential construction and there was really nothing for the RV industry for anyone of those manufacturers to say, 'Look, these are the materials we're using; these are some of the practices we're using to consider the environment,'" says Mandy Leazenby, TRA Certification president and a certified green professional. "So we put that in place and we've been doing that since '09, and we've had some clients that have been with us since the very beginning."

Building RVs, park models and more with "green" in mind is important because transparency is a strong factor for consumer purchasing decisions, TRA says. It also shows a company's commitment to smart construction and component choices.

"The benefit of companies reaching out to me is they already know about green, they already want it, they already have some idea," Leazenby says. "It might be a focus of theirs or a consideration in their production process or their corporate mindset. I would say it's definitely easier when they reach out to me, but then I'll see different companies that are making claims or have some solar or [are] utilizing cool green components. Then that's when I rush out the door and am like, 'Hey, you'd be perfect for our program.'"



Mandy Leazenby

Some manufacturers that TRA has certified include: Airstream, Coachmen, REV Group, Forest River, Foretravel



Mandy Leazenby with the Living Vehicle team during an evaluation.

Appealing to Millennials

Here's how TRA suggests RV manufacturers appeal to this demographic:

1. Incorporate eco-friendly materials and technologies into their RVs, such as renewable energy systems and energy-efficient appliances.
2. Design RVs with minimal environmental impact, focusing on lightweight construction and sustainable manufacturing processes.
3. Use recycled and recyclable materials, plus promote waste reduction and responsible disposal practices, which can resonate with millennials.
4. Leverage digital marketing and social media platforms to communicate their sustainability efforts effectively, connecting with millennials who actively seek out brands that prioritize sustainability.



Motorcoach, General Coach, Lance, Roadtrek, Winnebago and more.

Other RV industry-related companies that have been certified by TRA include: Go Power! Dometic, Dicor, Ultrafabrics, Zamp Solar, AquaView, Pinnacle and more.

"There is a cost for the actual certification. Green certified manufacturers have the ability to put a certified green label on their units, typically right next to the RVIA building codes – the standard to which RVs need to be built," Leazenby says, referring to the RV Industry Association (RVIA)'s standards seal.

The ratings that TRA uses are assigned based on the TRA Certification Checklist (see sidebar), and then the ratings earn the companies the level of Emerald, Gold, Silver or Bronze.

The level can tell dealers, and subsequently customers, a lot about how a manufacturer conducts their business.

"I think people, especially millennials, want that feel-good feeling that the product that they're buying, the company that produced it, has the environment in mind. It's not just an afterthought," Leazenby says. "So if you have three products on the shelf, obviously it's going to depend on your priorities, but you're going to find one that has some sort of sustainability skew. It's just more and more popular, and it's not so much a trend as it's just becoming the standard." RVP

TRA's Certification Checklist

When TRA conducts an evaluation for certification, the process includes evaluating the facility, looking at the procedures and practices, to measure against national consensus standards on the following points (among several others):

- ❑ Resource efficiency
- ❑ Energy efficiency
- ❑ Water efficiency
- ❑ Indoor air quality

Green RV Checklist, which includes factors such as:

- ❑ Construction materials recycled off-site
- ❑ Material scraps reused
- ❑ Reusable shipping containers for materials
- ❑ Materials with recycled content are used
- ❑ Rain drainage system installed
- ❑ Regional material used for major components
- ❑ RV component facility is ISO 9001/14001 or equal (certified that day-to-day operations are sustainable to reduce environmental impact)
- ❑ Interior/exterior LED lighting
- ❑ Awnings standard
- ❑ Energy efficient appliances
- ❑ Energy efficient furnace and AC
- ❑ Solar panels (prewired or factory-installed)



SUSTAINABILITY



Stashe the rabbit

FOLLOW THAT RABBIT!

How an unexpected customer inspired Briter Products' conservation efforts and benefited its community – plus 10 sustainability tips to save businesses money.

BY AVANTI LALWANI

A giant checkered rabbit hopped by as we opened the entry door to Briter Products' facility. Over the years, we have hosted many pets of RVers, but this was a first!

"This is Stashe. We have three bunny rabbits," an RV owner told us, who was here for a LiFePO4 battery bank conversion. The rabbits were unbelievably soft and friendly, but sadly, one of them was sick.

We were about to start the battery installation.

"We will just need to see your inverter and the remote, and then we won't need to be back in the coach," we explained to the owners.

During the installation, the owners explored our facility. They found several varieties of naturally growing plants on-site that they said were medicinal to sick rabbits. They asked to take some of the plants with them as they traveled to the Pacific Coast. We were more than happy to share what we thought were weeds! We finished the installation, and the owners were grateful and remained in touch with us for years. We stayed caught up with a healthy Stashe on social media.

This experience inspired us: not only would our technical expertise and improvement initiatives benefit customers, but so would stewardship of our facility's land. Now, every Earth Day, we focus on more opportunities to be good stewards of what we have.

Since the environmental calamities of the 1960s, Earth Day has served to raise awareness of the necessity of safeguarding our natural resources and their natural processes. Often schools, governments and nonprofits have taken the lead in environmental stewardship, but businesses have had to balance community contributions and environmental impact against time and resource limitations – and their bottom lines.

From the Ground Up

Briter Products is located in northern Indiana. Not only is this area the RV Capital of the World, but it also has a uniquely rich soil composition. We decided to try to rehabilitate a section of wasted land – land that didn't have dandelions, and in which a worm couldn't be found. It was fill-dirt, gravel and construction debris. A 40-by-40-foot section was marked off, and we began to remove big pieces of asphalt to add in grass clippings, compost, clean cardboard from our operations, coffee grounds and anything we could find to "make a soil." In time, we were able to grow and share herbs, cantaloupes and cucumbers with everyone who visited our facility, including RVers and their pets.

During this time, we realized that we were saving money on the landscaping, because grass clippings and fall leaves did not have to be hauled away. We also saved money with our recycler because we were using most of the cardboard that we generated. We stopped using fertilizers and pesticides, opting for safer methods of pest control. Through the Indiana University South Bend Center for a Sustainable Future, students were able to come and monitor changes in the soil and its pollinators. From March to November last year, we were able to share produce from our land with everyone.

Beyond the savings, it made sense to integrate environmental initiatives, because of our customers' awareness of businesses reducing their negative impact on the environment. In a survey by The Roundup.org, 78% of consumers feel that sustainability is important, and 55% of customers say they are willing to pay more for eco-friendly brands. Surprisingly, it has also become a part of brand identity, with an unbelievable 84% of surveyed customers saying that poor environmental practices will alienate them from a brand or company.

As an indicator of the nature of this global effort, there are





many ways businesses can participate in environmental stewardship efforts:

1. Energy-efficient operations: Using less power via energy-efficient technologies and practices, such as using LED lighting, installing solar panels or utilizing smart thermostats, can reduce energy costs, consumption and minimize carbon footprints.

2. Waste reduction & recycling: Using less helps to reduce waste, as well as recycling. Recycling centers are now incredibly high-tech, with some using infrared technology to sort materials in seconds with density evaluations. Implementing recycling programs, composting practices or incentives for employees to reduce paper use, or bringing reusable containers, are programs that some organizations currently employ. On an industrial level, there are businesses who broker excess material from production to companies who could use those materials as part of their products.

3. Environmentally safe products: Sustainable and environmentally friendly options for materials, supplies and equipment can help reduce negative environmental impacts and create healthier environments. These can include using eco-friendly cleaning products, recycled paper or packaging, or energy-efficient appliances.

4. Water conservation: Small businesses can adopt various water-saving measures like using low-flow faucets and toilets, detecting and repairing leaks promptly, and collecting rainwater for nonpotable uses. In northern Indiana, both St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties have Soil and Water Conservation Districts. These offices are brimming with the latest research and resources to assist with conservation efforts.

5. Transportation programs: Encouraging employees to carpool, bike or use public transportation can reduce carbon emissions and save gasoline expenditures. Many organizations offer electric vehicle charging stations or incentives for employees who choose eco-friendly transportation options.

6. Supporting local & sustainable suppliers: There is a saying in Elkhart – "A hard-to-find RV part can be found in Elkhart!" A common characteristic of the RV industry is suppliers are often local. Sourcing locally not only reduces transportation costs but also supports the local economy.

7. Environmental education & awareness: Providing rich information and clarifying the connections between environmental efforts and company goals, can help to inform, support, educate and inspire employees. City sustainability offices, as well as local Chambers of Commerce, may offer educational programs to help educate employees.

8. Collaboration with local environmental organizations: Environmental organizations offer benefits that businesses can use to demonstrate their environmental stewardship. Some offer badges to include on websites and social media; others organize cleanup campaigns. These collaborations can become content for social media, grants and ad campaigns.

9. Compliance with environmental regulations: Small businesses need to stay updated on local, regional and national environmental regulations. As an example, the Inflation Reduction Act has provisions for energy reduction, via incentives for solar system installations to reduce reliance on the grid and fossil fuels. There are federal, state and city incentives available for the adoption of solar technologies. Projects may even be able to combine incentives.

10. Data collection & communication: Sharing progress on sustainability goals, annual environmental reports or providing transparent information about the business's efforts toward environmental stewardship can inspire others and build trust with customers and stakeholders. In our case, sharing apples, pears and other produce created very strong memories.

Though stewardship practices may vary based on conditions and goals, businesses are important contributors to Earth Day activities and celebrations. We will never forget cute Stashe hopping around. We're incredibly grateful that our "weeds" helped Stashe become healthy enough for further travels with her owners. Our resulting sustainability efforts then saved us money, while providing food and other resources. Imagine the possibilities for your business. Sustainability practices, once implemented and supported, can support a cost-effective, enjoyable and healthy environment for all. RVP

Avanti Lalwani is CEO of Briter Products, a South Bend, Indiana, manufacturer and installer of customer RV solar systems and lithium batteries, and a fellow at the Center for Sustainability at Indiana University South Bend.



OPINION: ARE WE ALLOWED TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY YET?

Exploring the concerns surrounding sustainability and what it means for business.

BY DANIEL ZIMMERMANN

In the margin of an old journal of mine there is a quote that reads, "Freedom is rarely, if ever, experienced by the same people that purchased it."

I didn't record who originally wrote that verity, but I recall the words changing something inside me.

Sometimes, words can hit with such gravity that they force you into new realities that didn't exist a split second earlier.

The mid-20th century philosopher Richard Weaver penned a 1948 letter in the book "Ideas Have Consequences" to sound the alarm on an increasing trend of words becoming divorced from their meanings. This warning carefully considers the assertion that the better an idea is, the greater the cost of bringing that idea to light. This is no small issue for established market leaders and entrenched distribution models.

Now, 76 years later, we may want to take a second look at Weaver's book to remind ourselves of the potential consequences of blurring the lines between truth and reality.

For many years, I have been a consultant and entrepreneur who advises and builds companies whose focus is to provide the market with more "sustainable" cultures, business models and product lines.

A couple decades in, realism has had ample opportunity to punish the idealist in me to a point of near surrender. Not that I have lost my hope, but the amount of money and time spent vainly attempting to violate market norms in the interest of what "should" be has tested every facet of finance and endurance in my efforts to convince an obstinate market of the meaning of one simple, yet intimidating, word: sustainability.

By nature, the word denotes that the benefits of the product live beyond the experience of the primary users. When the value of the product is limited to only a single generation, then the word "consumable" may be a more accurate description.

Genuine sustainability is hard. Often, sustainable products have initial lower margins compared to their competitors and slower rates of market penetration due to the self-imposed manufacturing constraints and associated costs of educating skittish customers on novel and complicated technologies.

To the credit of the well-intending innovators who have made an earnest try of improving the planet, genuine sustainability in most every form, whether corporate structure or manufacturing, is wildly more difficult to achieve and requires a level of investment that few bankers and boards are willing to suffer.

Complicating the endeavor further is the adage, "Too good to be true is too good to be true." Products that really are solving legitimate problems have the very difficult barrier of a pitch-weary customer who has heard it all before.

This sad fact makes casualty of innovation when the marketing team convinces the manufacturer to reduce the efficacy of the product to better meet the real-world consumer expectations.

Perhaps this conclusion seems suspicious. You ask, "Why would a manufacturer have to reduce a product's value to increase market acceptance?" I'll use my own product as an example. In 2010, while working as a consultant, my dad brought a product to my attention that was a genuine game-changer. He had started a small service company cleaning out the black and gray holding tanks of RVs, boats and septic tanks. During a regular service, a customer introduced him to the possibility of utilizing probiotics as an alternative sustainable solution to traditional chemicals and enzymes in wastewater treatment.

A few phone calls, loads of experiments, licensing and manufacturing agreements later, TankTechsRx was born.

In my youthful ignorance, I thought this was a done deal. How could we not succeed when we could demonstrate that we are the exclusive manufacturers of a product that exchanges methane and ammonia odors for carbon dioxide and water? Not only was there no odor, but we also solved the problem of struvite (the calcium-looking particles that grow in the tank and foul sensors). And even more, the product is alive. It literally grows in a tank. Using very little probiotic as a starter base, it turns your whole tank or septic system into a many-multiple mother culture of beneficial microorganisms. And to top it all off, it is much cheaper than chemicals on a per dose comparison.

Our show sales were incredible, and some of our videos on YouTube were garnering as much as a million views.

Now, many, many flight miles later and the experience of sitting in the conference rooms and virtual meetings of most big box retailers and major distributors, I have become convinced of a couple things. First, I am more convinced than ever that there are products that really can do exactly what they claim. TankTechsRx is one of them. Secondly, the better the product, the less likely it will ever get to the shelf of a major retailer or distributor.

Why? Ideas have consequences.

Each time we stepped up to the plate, I would excitedly explain what we had for the market. Their response was, "Is there any way that you could reduce the efficacy?"

"Why in the world would I want to do that?" I responded. Their reply: "How am I supposed to place a product on the shelf that is cheaper and lasts longer than the product next to it? We make money on consumables. If your product does what you say, then it's literally too good for us to carry."

So, this begs the question: When "sustainability" is divorced from its meaning and becomes nothing more than a marketing ploy, how do we not find ourselves exactly where we are?

If a word is allowed to be defined by its use, then the current definition of sustainability might be more accurately defined as "A consumable whose value is defined by its expressed intent rather than its real benefit."

The question of the future isn't how to create sustainable solutions. In many industries, we can do that now. The question is rather, will we? Is anyone willing to plant trees they may never climb or make a product that has a higher degree of value to the consumer than to themselves? RVP

Daniel Zimmermann is an entrepreneur, speaker, writer and the CEO of Just Science, working to bring technologically advanced products to consumer markets with a focus on the health of people, the stewardship of the planet, affordable pricing and proof of efficacy. For more information, visit justscience.com.







BRO VECTOR/ADOBE STOCK

RV Dealer Websites: Why You Can't Just Set It & Forget It

Best practices to implement to stay competitive online.

Your dealership's online presence is just as important as your physical location. Often, your website is a potential customer's initial introduction to your business. So, that first impression is critical. Make sure it's a strong one.

The days when a website was something you could set and forget are long gone. In today's fast-paced market economy, the websites that drive more traffic and generate more leads demand ongoing maintenance and updates. You can help your dealership rank higher in searches, like on Google, with search engine optimization (SEO) features like mobile responsiveness and new content.

Routine maintenance should also include updates to website security, improved user experience and compliance with current laws and regulations (including privacy and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance). Those are just the bare minimum requirements, but here are some additional best practices that, when implemented, can help your website outperform competitors and deliver more impact to your bottom line.

Keep Your Website Content Fresh

The first step in keeping your website up to date is adding fresh content often. The RV industry is dynamic, with new models, features and structural changes



Emma Davis is the digital marketing manager for NetSource Media. For more information, visit netsourcemedia.com.

announced regularly. Keeping your website's content updated allows you to showcase the latest models and effectively engage potential customers. People are more likely to trust a dealership with an up-to-date and secure website.

Information related to RVs, prices and services may change over time. An outdated website that displays incorrect information can lead to confusion and frustration among potential buyers. Regular maintenance ensures that all content on your website is accurate and reflects current inventory. Building trust is essential in the RV industry, where buyers are making significant investments. A trustworthy online presence can lead to increased inquiries, more showroom visits and, ultimately, higher sales.

Implement a Dynamic SEO Strategy

Search engine optimization functions hand in hand with updated website content. Search engines like Google, where people may go to find an RV dealer in their area, prefer websites that are regularly updated and consistently comply with best practices. By continuously maintaining your website, you improve your chances of ranking higher on search engine results pages. When potential RV buyers search for information online, a well-optimized and frequently updated website increases your visibility and improves your chances of being seen.

Too many owners make the mistake of launching their site with SEO strategies that, while certainly best practices at the time, quickly become obsolete. If your SEO strategy isn't dynamic and adjusted to the tweaks and modifications that Google makes to its search algorithm, your website can quickly be left behind in search results.

A perfect example of this is the impending implementation of Google's Search Generative Experience (SGE), which leverages artificial intelligence to identify websites that effectively respond to search inquiries. This technology is still in beta testing, but once Google introduces it to its search algorithm, SGE could dramatically change the landscape of SEO. Websites that use dynamic SEO strategies are best positioned to be responsive to Google's SGE.

Website Performance Indicators & User Experience Matter

Similarly, website functionality and speed can impact both website users and search engine rankings. Slow-loading pages and unresponsive features can frustrate visitors and drive them away. Quality, ongoing maintenance includes optimizing website performance so your site runs smoothly and quickly. A fast and responsive website enhances user satisfaction and encourages visitors to explore further, potentially leading to more inquiries and sales.

User experience is a critical factor in the success of any online venture. Customers expect easy and enjoyable browsing on websites. Continuously improving your site – such as identifying



and addressing usability issues like broken links, confusing navigation or outdated design elements – makes it easier for potential customers to find the information they need and consider your dealership for their RV purchase.

With the wide range of devices, browsers and screen sizes being used today, it's important to check that your website is compatible across platforms. Routinely address compatibility issues, making sure your website is accessible to a broader audience. Whether customers are using desktop computers, laptops, tablets or smartphones, they should have a seamless experience when visiting your site.

Stay Compliant With Legal Requirements & Implement Security Protocols

It should probably go without saying but ensuring that your website complies with applicable laws and regulations is crucial. Laws related to website accessibility, privacy and data protection are continually evolving, so your website needs to stay up to date with legal requirements. This can help you avoid costly legal issues and demonstrates your commitment to ethical business practices. RVs are big-budget purchases, and customers will choose a dealership they feel that they can trust.

> "IN THE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE RV INDUSTRY, HAVING A WELL-MAINTAINED WEBSITE CAN SET YOUR DEALERSHIP APART."

On the more technical side, cybersecurity threats are an ever-present concern for businesses operating online. Many RV dealerships collect and store customer data, making it crucial to prioritize website security. Regular maintenance includes software updates, security patches and monitoring for vulnerabilities. This proactive approach protects customer data, maintains the integrity of your dealership and avoids costly data breaches.

In the highly competitive RV sales industry, having a well-maintained website can set your dealership apart from the competition. It showcases your dedication to providing the best experience for potential buyers before they even arrive on the lot. A website that stands out in terms of content, performance and security can influence customers' decisions and make your dealership the preferred choice. RVP





Understanding PVR & How It Can Improve F&I Revenue

Boost satisfaction and help customers get value for their money.



Stephanie Alderman, CEO of ReserveMax by Canopy Technologies, drives the company's strategic vision, culture and business development. Her career has focused on financial operations, lending and technology. Before joining ReserveMax, she served in leadership positions across operations, managed services, and product strategy for firms devoted to automating operations and workflows in the finance industry.

Q: What is PVR, and why is it important for RV dealerships to track?

A: PVR, or "per vehicle retailed," is a metric that measures the average amount of profit that a dealership makes on each vehicle sold. It is calculated by taking the total F&I (finance & insurance) revenue generated by the dealership and dividing it by the number of vehicles

sold. Some prefer to define it as "per vehicle revenue" or "per vehicle ratio." No matter the terminology used, PVR is important for RV dealerships to track because it can help them identify areas where they can improve their F&I revenue and take steps to increase it.

Q: How can RV dealerships increase their PVR?

A: There are several ways that RV dealerships can increase their PVR. One way is to focus on selling more F&I products. This can be achieved by using automated prequalification and comparison tools to simplify the lending process, by offering customers a range of F&I products that are tailored to their needs and by utilizing a menu tool to assist in presenting products to customers in a consistent and compliant way. By doing so, dealerships can improve customer satisfaction, as customers are more likely to feel that they are getting value for money.

Another way to increase PVR is to capture the reserve efficiently. The reserve is the difference between the interest rate that a dealership charges a customer and the interest rate that the dealership pays to the lender. By capturing the reserve efficiently, dealerships can increase their F&I revenue without having to sell more products.

Finally, dealerships need to focus on improving customer satisfaction. This can be achieved by offering customers a range of F&I products that are tailored to their needs, and by providing them with a high level of customer service. By doing so, dealerships can improve their reputation and encourage customers to return in the future.

Q: How can RV dealerships use innovation to expand their toolkit?

A: Digital platforms and tools can facilitate personalized interactions with customers, making it easier to offer tailored products and services. By leveraging digital technology, both lenders and dealers can provide a more seamless and personalized customer experience, ultimately leading to increased PVR.

There are software tools in the marketplace that can help dealers track customers, pair them with appropriate vehicles based on their specific needs and credit profiles, integrate with other related tools, streamline the financing process and sell products more effectively. Finding the tools that fit with your workflows, products and lending programs is required to stay competitive in the current market environment.

Q: How can RV dealerships structure deals correctly?

A: RV dealerships can structure deals correctly by having a good understanding of the lending relationships available to them, and how to use their various programs to their advantage. They can also simplify the lending process with prequalification and automated comparison tools, which can help them sell more products, compare and capture the reserve efficiently and improve customer satisfaction.



Along with software tools, there are consultants and service providers that educate and train employees in dealership, across a variety of mediums. Focusing on the right balance of software tools and training from sales to F&I, so that deals are structured as early as possible in the deal process, is the most effective way to increase a dealership's PVR.

Q: Why is it important for RV dealerships to have the correct lending relationships?

A: Having the correct lending relationships is important for RV dealerships because it can help them offer more lending options to customers and to maximize PVR, for each customer. Some lenders will offer a higher reserve at a comparable rate to others but might not provide the needed room in the back-end or front-end of a deal to add products. Understanding all the options available and choosing the best one for each deal will directly impact a dealership's PVR. Working with the right lenders, and understanding the ins and outs of their programs, means dealerships can offer customers attractive interest rates and financing options. This can increase customer satisfaction and help dealerships to sell more products.

Q: How can RV dealerships simplify the lending process?

A: RV dealerships can simplify the lending process by using prequalification and automated comparison tools. Prequalification can help to streamline the lending process by allowing dealerships to quickly determine which customers are likely to qualify for financing. Automated comparison and presentation tools can help to speed up the approval process and reduce the need for manual comparison, which is time-consuming and can be subject to human error and bias. Using all the tools that are at a dealership's disposal in an integrated and thoughtful way can help dealerships to sell more products and improve customer satisfaction.

Q: How can RV dealerships capture the reserve efficiently?

A: RV dealerships can capture the reserve efficiently by working with the right lenders and using automated comparison tools. By doing so, dealerships can offer customers attractive interest rates and financing options, while also capturing the reserve efficiently. This can help dealerships to increase their F&I revenue even without having to sell more products.

In conclusion, PVR is an important metric that can help RV dealerships to increase their F&I revenue. By tracking PVR, dealerships can identify areas where they can improve, and take steps to increase their revenue. This can be achieved by structuring deals correctly, using the right lending relationships, simplifying the lending process with prequalification and automated comparison and presentation tools, selling more products, capturing the reserve efficiently and improving customer satisfaction. RVP



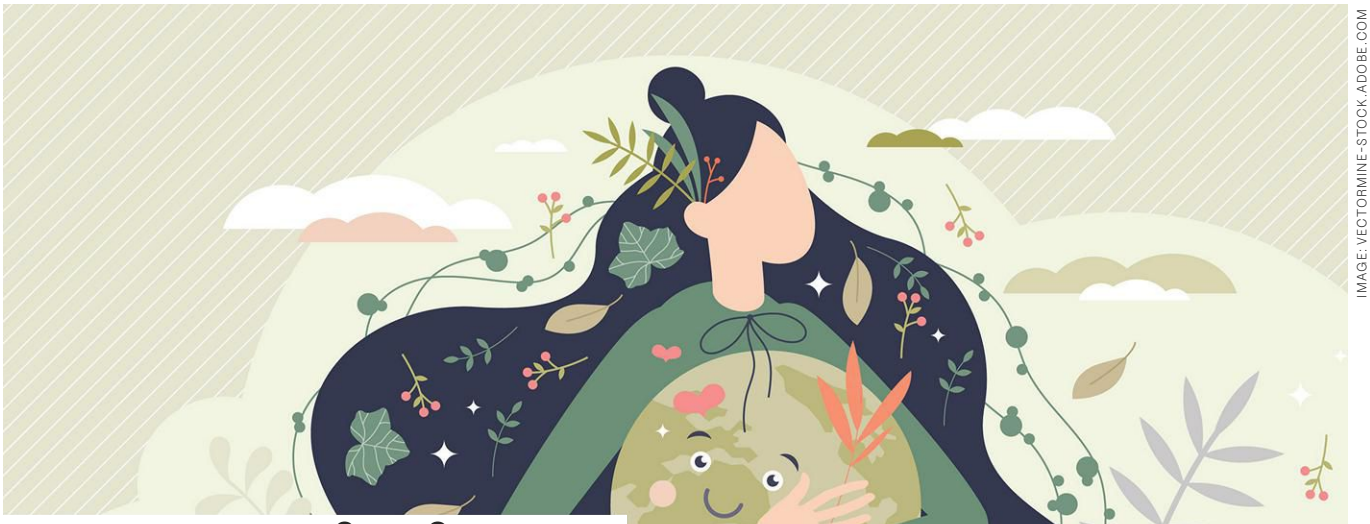


IMAGE: VECTORMINE-STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Sustaining Your Parts & Accessories Customer Base

Positively affect both Mother Nature and your sales by being more eco-friendly.

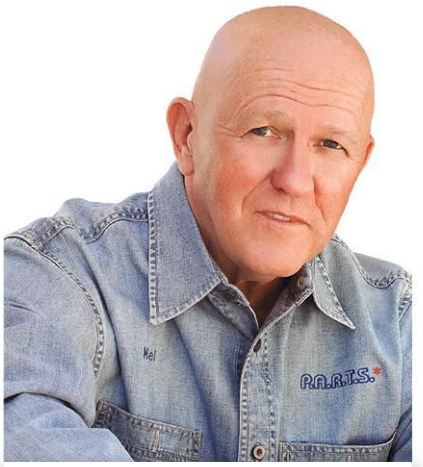
There has been substantial focus on the topic of sustainability in various media. Many corporations have established a sustainability officer/manager position, and some of these businesses have realized an increase in sales by supporting sustainability. With sustainability being a special theme of this month's RV PRO issue, I decided to jump on the bandwagon and include a few points of sustainability as it pertains to your parts and accessories operations.

How could you support sustainability in your parts and accessories operations?

Probably the best place to start looking is the content of your parts and accessories inventory. What products do you offer that could support sustainability? At first glance, you could probably suggest chemicals and products that are eco-friendly, such as blackwater treatment items and biodegradable toilet tissue.

What about other products that might not initially seem to support sustainability? Do you stock tire/wheel covers to minimize deterioration of the tire compounds? If the tires last longer because they have been protected from the elements, aren't those tire/wheel covers helping your environmentally conscious efforts? And, since we are talking about tires, do you offer tire pressure monitoring system (TPMS) products? TPMS also could extend the lifetime of tires by assisting in maintaining proper inflation, which reduces unnecessary wear due to under- or overinflation.

What about RV cleaning products?



Mel Selway is the president of P.A.R.T.S. Inc., a Sahuarita, Arizona-based firm providing business management analysis and training to retailers. He can be reached at 520-336-8606 or melselway@aol.com.

Do your POP displays stress the sustainability benefits of maintaining the exterior and interior surfaces of your customers' RVs? You could offer workshops for your customers that include demonstrations in the proper, effective use of these products – with special emphasis on the frequency of application and the quantity required to maintain those surfaces.

If any of your customers perform routine maintenance of their RVs, do you include maintenance schedules in your displays of the chemicals and tools required to perform that maintenance? For customers who will be traveling, especially on extended trips, do you suggest maintenance kits that include the chemicals, tools and other products, such as cleaning materials, that they will need while on the road? These kits ensure that your dealership sells these products and not another dealership along the way. Could you possibly market your service department in those same displays by including signage advertising the cost of routine maintenance?

As you can see, sustainability support could possibly increase your sales in the parts and accessories department. So, maybe you should schedule a staff meeting to brainstorm some ideas on sustaining both the environment and, coincidentally, your customer base. Perhaps include some examples of other companies/industries using sustainability in their operations. I offer an example of a company that has incorporated sustainability as a core principle for many years – Patagonia. I refer you to the Wikipedia article on Patagonia and its founder, Yvon Chouinard, to see how your business could benefit from sustainability.

And since Patagonia is almost synonymous with camping and the outdoors, I will rappel to the second topic of this month's column.

RV Camping

The February issue of RV PRO featured two articles about RV manufacturers that produce models for RVers who like to go off-grid. According to The Dyrt, which provides camping subscription software, twice as many people went off-grid camping in 2022 than in 2021, and this increase continued in 2023. You might be thinking: That's interesting, yet how does that impact my parts and accessories department? Good question. Allow me to ask some questions to assist you in answering that.

What goods and equipment might these off-grid RVers require to support their lifestyle, and which of these items do you carry in your parts and accessories inventories? How will they be powering their RV components and their personal gear? Do you supply solar panels to provide that power? What training have your RV sales, parts and service personnel received regarding solar panels?

Another article in the February issue of RV PRO focused on lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO4) batteries, which could provide RVers some of that house power needed during off-grid camping. What models of these LiFePO4 batteries do you have available in your inventory? Both the solar panels and LiFePO4 batteries support the sustainability theme by offering a renewable energy source and a longer battery life.

For these off-grid RVers, do you offer off-road tires, suspension upgrades and leveling equipment to address the sometimes less than flat terrain where they might park their rig? When discussing these possible upgrades with your camping customers, are your RV sales and parts associates able to quote the installed price for these items? This could be a cross-merchandising opportunity. Some of these upgrades may be costly, so it could be important to include the installation costs when discussing these items. It could also be beneficial to close the sale if the sales and parts associates know the time required to install the item(s). In fact, these associates might even invite their customer to meet with the service advisor to discuss scheduling of the work.

Your answers to some of these questions might require changes to your inventory and to your associates' training. Yet change is inevitable, per a quote attributed to Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher: "The only constant in life is change." My challenge to you is, are you willing to make those changes? RVP





PHOTO: DUNCAN ANDISON–STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Spring Refresh

No money to renovate? No problem – even small things can make a store feel new and fresh.

It's that dreaded time of year again – spring cleaning! If you had a parent who insisted on a thorough cleaning of everything in your room, including drawers and closets, you understand that feeling of apprehension. There are several reasons to go through this annual ordeal, and they all add up to increased sales.

The following ideas range from free to affordable, and a few are fairly quick.

Free & Quick-ish

Angles lead the eyes and feet of customers wherever you want them to walk. If you have a wall of products that aren't selling well and you can angle a few floor fixtures toward that wall, customers will see it and naturally walk that way. Angles are insistent – they act on our unconscious minds and lead us in the direction they are pointing. If you have interesting and well-presented merchandise at the end of an angled aisle or fixture, it will be noticed and potentially purchased.

I consulted for United Rentals some years ago, and in one store they had never sold any generators that were displayed on wall shelves perpendicular to the aisle. All the floor generators faced the aisle, so as people walked past, they saw the floor generators but never noticed the wall. I took two minutes to turn each generator to the same angle so the eye would be drawn to the side wall. They sold a generator from that wall within a half hour. It was simple, free and effective.

Not Free But Affordable

When the owners of Crate & Barrel opened their first store, they didn't have the money for floor fixtures, so they used the crates and barrels that the products were shipped in. Their concept was for customers to walk through the space and see something new and exciting with every turn. This merchandising concept worked for them as they now have over 100 stores in nine countries worldwide.

While reworking your entire sales floor may be the last thing on your agenda right now, you might consider modifying this concept for new product displays. Instead of a crate or barrel, a modern equivalent is a grouping of painted wood or MDF-covered cubes at varying heights. This grouping would display a new product, and each cube top would hold one size of that product. If you don't have space for a cubelike display in your accessories/chemicals area, consider putting it near an indoor RV or just beyond your decompression zone as customers walk into the store. Your decompression zone is inside your store, about 6 to 8 feet in front of and on either side of your front door.

Another way to showcase new products is on a small table you can buy or easily build. Look at home and furnishing stores for clean, modern small tables. The top of the table holds a few samples of the new product with a "New Product!" sign. If appropriate, open one box and pull the item out so people can touch and see it. Stock the rest of the inventory neatly underneath the table. Customers will figure out they can buy what's below.

Free But Potentially Annoying

Clear the clutter. This is a free way to increase sales immediately. It can change



Linda Cahan is the president of Portland, Oregon-based Cahan & Co., a consulting firm that works with retailers of all sizes and categories to improve their bottom line through affordable and appropriate visual merchandising, store design and renovations. For more information, visit lindacahan.com.

how your store is perceived and shopped. Start with the areas customers can't see first. If your stockroom is filled with old fixtures, donate, sell or give them away. Give yourself a week to get rid of them. Then clean up your shelves and toss whatever you haven't used in years. You may also find some important things you thought were lost forever. Next, clean up the floor area around the checkout counter. Move into the corners of the store, and get rid of all the accumulated junk that's been "hiding" there.

The other night I went to my favorite Thai restaurant in Portland, Oregon. The food is excellent, and the whole place is decorated beautifully. About four months ago, I noticed some used boxes starting to collect in front of their back wall. Two nights ago, I saw that it had mutated into a mountain of empty boxes resting on bags of rice. After complimenting the woman serving us on the food and décor, I asked her why the boxes were there. She said they were used for takeout. When the small number of boxes were ostensibly overlooked by customers, the owner (possibly unconsciously) stopped seeing them as messy, and now they were in a convenient place. It was shocking to see boxes piled at least 4 feet high, covering some of the lovely wall art.

Is this an issue in your RV dealership? Little "conveniences" can become visual annoyances to customers. A hot tub store in Oregon did a great job on a renovation but started stacking broken-down cardboard boxes between their swim spa and front window, perceiving it as an "empty" space. So, what do customers see as they walk up to the front door? Lots of cardboard. Not a great visual next to a $17,000 swim spa or, in your case, a $220,000 RV.

Free: You've Got to Move It

I gave a seminar on visual merchandising at a trade show, and a woman raised her hand and told me that every morning she'd walk into her store and touch three items. And every day, those three items would sell! I joked that everyone would go back to their stores and touch everything from front to back. Joking aside, touching an item does several important things. First, you notice (hopefully) if it needs dusting. Next, if it's out of place or the label isn't facing front, you turn it so it looks better. And last – the woo-woo part – you transfer energy from your hands to the product. Whether you believe this or not, try it. It's worth a shot, and in many cases, it works. When you move something or change it, it gets energized. Move the merchandise on one shelf, cleaning as you go, and see if the sales improve in that area over the next two days.

Not Free: Refresh Your Signage

Do you have more signs than you need? Are they current, clean and in excellent condition? Get rid of anything out-of-date, faded, curled, torn or irrelevant.

If you have the same signs you opened with – and you've been open for more than three years – it's time to refresh them, and it doesn't need to be overwhelming. Is it time for a new font? Are your signs easy to read? A computer program can churn out updated signs that fit into your sign holders. Use heavier paper and the signs will look 100% better than regular copy paper. Dust all your dimensional signage. Make sure your lights are directed so that each wall sign pops. Are your signs in the right place? If the merchandise has moved but the signs haven't, they are misleading to your customers. Put them where they belong.

Free: Feng Shui Principles in Your Store

I wrote the book "Feng Shui for Retailers" a while ago. It simplifies complicated concepts that genuinely help people create healthy and prosperous environments. A few ideas: Get rid of anything that blocks your entrance, including overhanging branches, garbage cans, boxes, bunched up entry mats or too high/large fixtures. Remove sharp corners in tight spaces.

Any one of these ideas will make a difference in your dealership. Try one, and if you like the results, keep going through the list and enjoy the benefits! RVP



CAMPING PRODUCTS

WATER FILTER

Camco, Greensboro, North Carolina, offers its Tastepure RV/Marine Water Filter. Made in the USA, this filter blocks silt, sediment and more with a 20-micron sediment filter for clean drinking water on the go. The wide body design boosts flow efficiency, while the flexible hose protector prevents kinks and strains. Certified lead-free, this filter connects easily to any water source.

camco.net

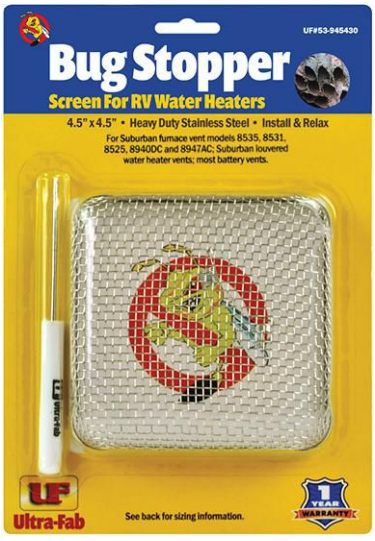




ROASTING FORK

Campfire Industries, South Jordan, Utah, presents its Wolf'em Stick. The Wolf'em Stick features a rotary handle, a backward-facing roasting fork to prevent marshmallows falling into the fire and a biscuit attachment for roasting biscuit cups. Other Wolf'em accessories include the Camping Time Cookbook, drawstring Carry Bag and the new Wolf'em Plus Pack with S'more Betta Marshmallow Roaster and Big Bad Wolf Biscuit Roaster.

wolfem.com



INSECT SCREENS

Ultra-Fab Products, Elkhart, Indiana, offers its Bug Stopper Insect Screens, designed to make your RVing experience more enjoyable by keeping pest from blocking appliance vents. Bug Stopper Insect Screens keep out mud daubers, wasps, mice and birds. The easy-to-install screens don't block air flow and are made of heavy-duty stainless steel.

ultra-fab.com



RV ROOF AIR CONDITIONER

Furrion, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Furrion Chill HE RV Roof Air Conditioners. Furrion Chill offers a wide collection of rooftop RV air conditioners with high energy efficiency and cooling capacity ratings. Lower temperatures more quickly with Furrion's 120-volt RV AC units. Furrion's camper air conditioners are engineered for life on the road. Available in manual, single-zone and multizone controls.

furrion.com



ELECTRIC COOLER

Recreational Living for GE Appliances, Louisville, Kentucky, offers its GE Profile Electric Cooler. The GE Profile Electric Cooler provides on-the-go cooling without the need for ice. These coolers are available in a 50-liter and 75-liter capacity, have a cooling range from -6 F to 68 F and keep items cold for up to 8 hours on one charge. The 50-liter electric cooler has one cooling zone, while the 75-liter has two. Other features include an LCD display, removable baskets, USB charging ports and an optional wheel and handle accessory kit.

geappliances.com



WATER PURIFIER

Guzzle H2O, White Salmon, Washington, presents its Stream LED UV Water Purifier. The Stream treats water with LED UV to kill bacteria, protozoa and viruses. Its 0.5-micron, solid activated carbon block filter reduces lead, mercury and VOCs to improve taste. The three-stage system will pump, filter and purify 35 gallons of water straight into an onboard tank out of any freshwater source. The Stream includes its own battery and works without pumping or adding chemicals.

guzzleh2o.com







E-BIKE

Jupiter Bike, Tampa, Florida, offers its Discovery X5 E-Bike. The compact and portable Discovery X5 features a lightweight and sturdy magnesium alloy frame that can support up to 265 pounds. Once folded, it's held in place by magnets, allowing the e-bike to store easily in small spaces like RVs, boats, private planes, or in a home or office. The X5 rides comfortably and has three levels of pedal assist. An LCD display shows your speed, distance traveled, pedal assist level and battery life.

jupiterbike.com



COFFEE TABLE

Kuma Outdoor Gear, Edmonton, Alberta, presents its Camp Crew Coffee Table. This low-rise table is perfect for group game time, drinks or snacks, or easy access to items as you lounge around your campsite. The table is also very stable once the CrossKonnect midbar locking system is in place. Features a durable 1-inch square leg folding system, a slider click-in tabletop and a compact fold design for easy transport. Comes in a black powder-coated aluminum frame, in bamboo with a printed aluminum top or in bamboo with a powder-coated frame. 300D Polyester carry bag included.

kumaoutdoorgear.com



POWER INVERTERS

Samlex America, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, offers its NTX Series Pure Sine Wave Inverters. The NTX Series with Hypersurge technology delivers AC power for TVs, laptops, microwaves and more while on the road. The NTX Series are FCC certified to ensure clean AC power is delivered to your equipment. ETL certified to meet UL/CSA safety standards, compact and lightweight, the NTX inverters have a single variable speed temperature and load-controlled fan for quiet operation. An LCD remote is included with all models.

samlexamerica.com

STOVETOP OVEN

Omnia Sweden, Chicago, Illinois presents its Stovetop Oven. With the Omnia Sweden oven, you get freshly baked bread and oven-cooked food using the heat of the cooktop. It's lightweight, easy to use, takes up little space and requires no installation. The oven can be taken to cabins or used in caravans, mobile homes, boats, next to roof tents or on four-wheel drive adventures.

omniasweden.com





BLUETOOTH SPEAKER

Poly-Planar, Summerville, South Carolina, presents its FS1 Floating Bluetooth Speaker. With 60 years of experience building audio products, Poly-Planar has designed a speaker built to withstand pool chemical exposure, IP67 water and dust ingress protection, UV rays and clumsy hands. "Always Pairing" allows Bluetooth connection, and the one-button setup allows multiple units to be connected together. The water-safe charge port uses inductive charging technology to ensure there are no power leaks from the 6-hour battery.

polyplanar.com



PORTABLE POWER UNIT

Southwire, Carrollton, Georgia, offers its Portable Power Stations Elite Series. Southwire's 500-watt and 1,100-watt portable power units have the ability to power CPAP machines, computers, tablets, phones, fans and more. With six ways to charge and the ability to power multiple devices at once, they are sure to come in handy on all your RV adventures.

southwire.com





RVSKY LIGHTS



#1 in replacement skylights

Exact OEM replacement for a perfect fit

Over 70 styles in 5 different colors

Thermoformed polycarbonate skylights

UV resistant and extremely strong

SKYLIGHT SHADES



Thermo Shield Shade 22x30
Part #SLS2230B

Thermo Shield Shade
14x14 | Part #SLS1414B

Thermo Shield
14x22 | Part #SLS1422B
Standard Shade
14x22 | Part #SLS1422

Available in Three Sizes!

Thermo Shield Shade
Blocks nearly all light coming into the RV, providing ultimate temperature and light control.

Standard Shade
Economical solution designed to help reduce heat and light in your RV by reducing the UV effect.

Installs in Minutes - Hardware Included
Made from Mold-Resistant Materials

Available through your RV Parts Distributor

SR SPECIALTY RECREATION

MADE IN USA 619.593.9360

www.specrec.com



RV CLEANING PRODUCT

Star brite, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, presents its new Star brite Ceramics line. The latest lineup from Star brite features SiO2 ceramic formulations in products for every surface, including metal and vinyl. Star brite Ceramics Wash & Wax provides instant beading and shine. This SiO2-infused formula contains a "sacrificial polymer," while the ceramic underlayer cures to a durable, stain-resistant barrier against damaging UV-rays, stains and everyday dirt and grime. Available now.

starbrite.net



GRILLING RACK

Stromberg Carlson, Traverse City, Michigan, offers its Stake & Grill. The locking handle slides up and down the stake to adjust the heat and pivots away from the fire for loading and unloading of food. The upturned edge on the grill prevents food from sliding off. The chrome finish cleans easily, and the grill can be stored in a heavy-duty nylon bag. It measures 15 inches wide by 22 inches long and includes a 36-inch-long stake.

strombergcarlson.com



PORTABLE REFRIGERATOR/ FREEZER

Truma, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Truma Cooler C30 Portable Refrigerator/Freezer. The Truma Cooler C30 Portable Refrigerator/ Freezer is Truma's smallest single-zone model at 30 liters (32 quarts). Like all Truma Cooler portable fridge freezers, it can cool down to -8 F using 12- or 24-volt DC or 110-volt AC power. The space-saving model can fit in any RV or even in the backseat of a tow vehicle for easy access.

truma.com



RV DOOR HANDLE EXTENSION

Lippert, Elkhart, Indiana, offers its LatchXtend RV Door Handle Extension. The typical RV entry door paddle latch has some ergonomic issues. Small paddle latches are hard to get your hand under in order to get your entry door open. Also, in most fifth wheel applications, paddle latches tend to be very high off the ground, making them difficult to reach for many people, including children. The Lippert LatchXtend RV door handle makes it easier to access the latch on your entry door.

lippert.com



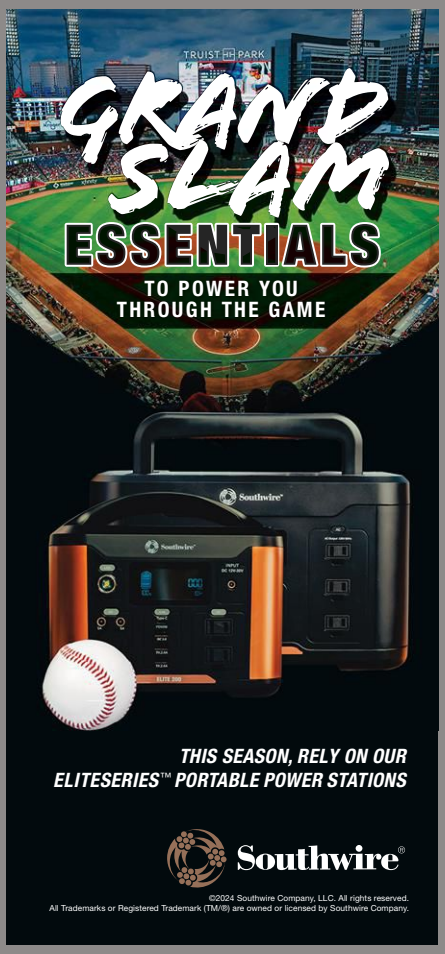
PET SHOWER

Valterra Products, Mission Hills, California, presents its Phoenix Wash & Wag Pet Shower, featuring three spray settings for bath time. Choose from a full spray for rinsing off dirt, a gentle massage spray or a pause function for lathering up shampoo. The separate power spray nozzle tackles cleanup, while the 60-inch hose provides flexibility. The Wash & Wag Pet Shower is easy to install with the included paw-shaped bracket, outdoor hose adapter and diverter.

valterra.com











SUBSCRIBE TODAY TO OUR NEWSLETTER & MAGAZINE

ALL THE RV KNOWLEDGE YOU NEED – and it's FREE!

Subscribe now and get:

- Coverage of News & Trends
- Acquisitions & Brand Changes
- Promotions & Accolades



RVPRO

rv-pro.com/subscribe



advertiser index

OREN - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

ADVERTISER	PAGE
Camco Manufacturing, LLC	11
Century Chemical Corp	51
Design Engineering Inc/DEI	51
Dexter Axle	2
Dragonfly Energy	23
Duo Form Plastics	32
Garmin Corp	3
Go Power!	5
Grand Design RV LLC	7
Haier US Appliance Solutions Inc dba GE Appliances	BC
Hughes Autoformers	17
Icon Technologies Ltd	13
Lightspeed	21
Marshall Excelsior	40
MTI Industries	45
NetSource Technologies	39

ADVERTISER	PAGE
NTP-STAG	IFC
Patrick Industries Inc	54
Patrick Industries Inc	9
Pinnacle Appliances	54
Riverside RV	IBC
RV Roof Magic	49
Southwire Co	54
Specialty Recreation Inc	52
Thermo-Tec	53
TRA Certification Inc	53
Trim-Lok Inc	33
Truck System Technologies Inc	47
Truma	1
Ultimate Toys	42
Valterra Products Inc	43

Pit Stop

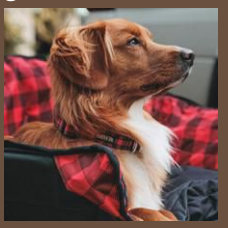


FOUR-LEGGED TRAILBLAZERS

What would the outdoors be without our furry companions to enjoy it with? Our industry partners introduced us to these sweet friends – did you see them on our pages this month?



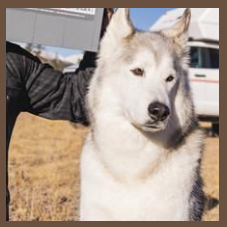
Bella, Alliance



Archie, Kuma



Moji, Dragonfly



Loki, Dragonfly



Stashe, Briter



Subie, Alliance

JANUARY 2024 SHIPMENTS

22,674 TOTAL

11.1% INCREASE compared to January 2023 (20,405 units)

RV wholesale shipments are expected to hit 350,000 units in 2024.

"We continue to be optimistic about the direction the industry is heading this year, and this latest shipment report aligns with the moderate increases we are expecting in 2024," said RVIA President and CEO Craig Kirby. "RVing remains one of the most affordable ways to travel and we are encouraged by the excitement consumers have for the RVing lifestyle, evident by strong campground bookings for the upcoming spring travel season and solar eclipse."



PONTOART-ADOBE STOCK

How widespread is the sustainability "trend," and will it continue? According to TheRoundup.org survey:

- Sustainable products have an **overall 17% market share and a 32% share of growth.**
- Products marketed as sustainable **grew 2.7x faster** than those that weren't.
- 75% of sustainable goods **sell better online** than in store.
- 78% of consumers feel that **sustainability is important.**
- 62% of people say they "always or often" seek products to buy because they are sustainable.
- 55% of consumers are **willing to pay more** for eco-friendly products.
- 84% of customers say that poor environmental practices **will alienate them from a brand or company.**



The National Park Service announced that 400 national parks reported a total of **325.5 million recreation visits in 2023**, an increase of 13 million or 4% over 2022. NPS data shows that visitation is increasing in the more traditional offseasons at many parks, with more visits in the spring and fall than seen in years past. And 20 parks, many of them less well known, **broke visitation records in 2023.**



RIVERSIDE RV

3 Fantastic half-ton towable brands, including America's True Vintage Trailer - the RETRO! Hitch to Riverside RV and add some color to your lot- Secure your market now!

GoRiversideRV.com

If interested please email or call

Sales@GoRiversideRV.com

260-499-4578 Ext 108

Profile™

This is smarter living.™

Delivering powerful, superior cooling performance in a sleek, compact design, these units are engineered to deliver maximum comfort with quiet operation. A variety of models and accessories are available — including heat pumps with industry leading performance, operating with outdoor temperatures as low as 25ºF.

Low Profile RV Air Conditioners & Heat Pumps

PLC Series
Cool only
13.5 High Efficiency
13.5K & 15K

PLH Series
Heat Pump
13.5K High Efficiency
13.5K & 15K



Explore the full range of our recreational living appliances