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RV PRO



Derek Bryant
Campers Union
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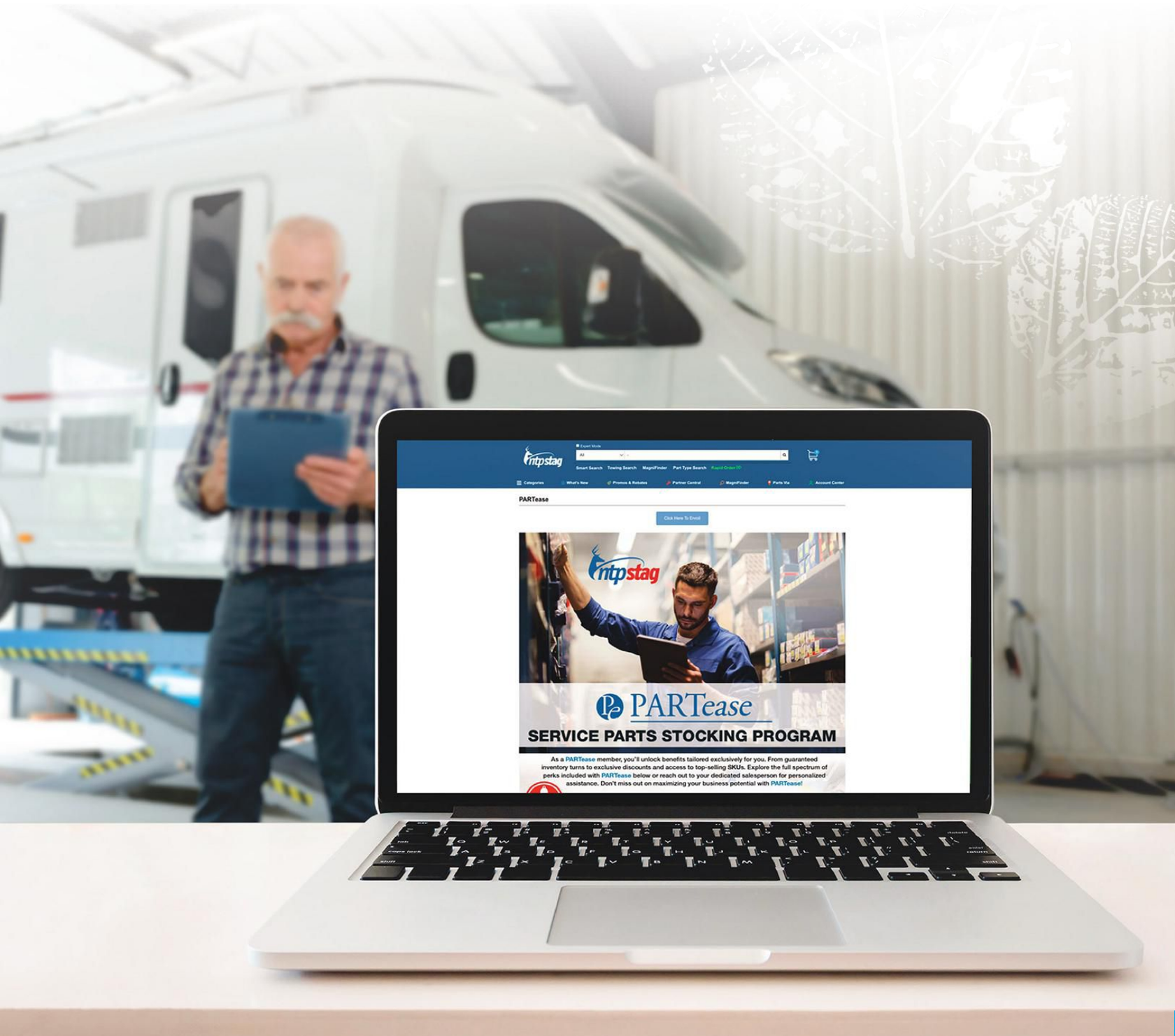
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Derek Bryant of Campers Union. *Photo courtesy of Campers Union*

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RV PRO



I come from a long line of relatives who dedicated years of service to their chosen companies and careers. My grandfathers both worked at their companies for more than 40 years — my mom's father, Richard Sage, at Exxon and my dad's father, Donald Dome, at the YMCA in Manhattan. My father served in the U.S. Air Force for 22 years, followed by working at Continental Airlines, then United Airlines, for 20 years. My mom — the bravest of them all, in my opinion — was a teacher for 24 years. And my sister, Karen, has worked at Bose Corp. for 17 years and counting.

I'm the oddball of the family; I've worked for RV PRO's parent company, Cahaba Media Group, for six years — my longest place of employment to date.

But my case isn't all that unusual these days. Last year, Forbes reported that the average tenure of an employee is 4.1 years. For workers ages 25 to 34, it's just 2.8 years. The average turnover rate in the United States in 2023 was 3.8%. And that turnover is costly for companies — it costs 33% of an employee's salary to replace that person, according to Forbes.

These statistics can be startling, but there's also something we can do to improve these numbers. The RV industry has numerous employees who have been at their companies for 20-plus years, and we are honored to highlight their experience and expertise starting on page 36. Read their stories to learn what kept them thriving in their jobs for so many years. A few of the reasons I took away included feeling valued by their managers, receiving opportunities to gain professional development, being trusted and empowered enough to make decisions on their own, and building connections with their coworkers.

These reasons are supported by the Forbes study, which said 44% of employees don't feel they have a desirable career path. Forbes suggested "defining a compelling career path may involve setting goals, defining required skill sets and creating clear and achievable job descriptions."

Many employees (32%) who leave a company within the first 90 days of employment said their reason for doing so is because company culture isn't a good fit.

And employees who don't receive recognition are two times as likely to look for a new job, according to Forbes. In fact, 34% of employees who don't feel valued will leave within the next year.

All of these are reasons to consider retention a high priority for your business, and to look to companies that are doing it right and finding ways to emulate the practices they have in place that keep their employees there for years and years.

If you have ideas about why your employees have stayed with you for a long time period, please let me know; email: jdking@cahabamedia.com.

As always, thank you for reading!

Jennifer King



Celebrating my mom's retirement from teaching in 2017: my husband, Jermaine, and I *(right)*, with my parents (center) and my sister, Karen, and her husband, Rich *(left)*.



My father, David Dome, with the flag that flew over the U.S. Capitol in honor of his service in the U.S. Air Force.

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, Javacia Harris Bowser, Linda Cahan, John McCurry, Mike Harbour, Phillip Perry, Jessica Rector, 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

SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
John Gaskins
205-314-8268
jgaskins@cahabamedia.com

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

SALES DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE
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

Director of Events
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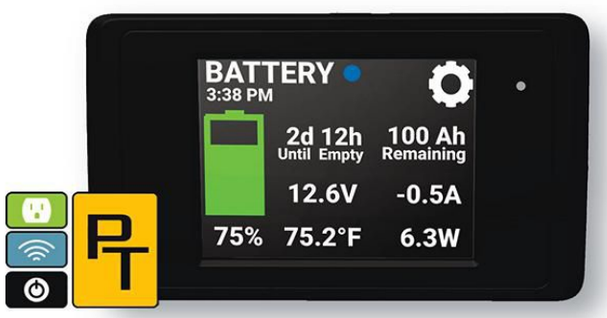
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KING Names Chief Commercial Officer


DeWaard

KING Connect, a supplier of RV connectivity products, promoted Tom DeWaard to chief commercial officer.

Formerly vice president of sales and marketing, DeWaard will take on the responsibilities of all international business relations, OEM sales and the customer care center, in addition to his current sales and marketing duties.

DeWaard is an RV industry veteran who has been with KING for over three years.

"I am truly excited to help lead KING in this new chapter of our company's history," DeWaard said. "It's an honor to be a part of such a dynamic team that is filled with experienced, talented and passionate employees. Throughout the years, KING has been a leader in design and innovation and I look forward to building on that solid foundation. We will continue to position ourselves as leaders and innovators within the RV industry, while helping outdoor enthusiasts stay connected to the people they love while out exploring the great outdoors."

"We are thrilled to have an experienced industry professional of Tom's caliber step into greater responsibility here at KING and are excited to see what the future will bring," said Susan King, CEO and owner.

KING provides connectivity products designed specifically for RV and mobile use.

Carefree of Colorado Taps Director of Aftermarket Sales

Carefree of Colorado, makers of RV awnings, promoted Kevin Jastrem to director of aftermarket sales.

In his new role, Jastrem leads Carefree's participation in the RV aftermarket channel by developing and nurturing relationships with distribution partners, as well as conceptualizing and implementing programs that support RV dealerships.

"Kevin's expertise in the aftermarket channel, including his strong relationships with both distributors and dealers, will translate to success in the director role," said Kevin Mayer, vice president of sales and marketing.

Jastrem's promotion coincides with Carefree's appointment of Derema Group as its representation in the aftermarket channel, following a recent product introduction of Alpine Slideouts and a comprehensive replacement Canopy program, also aimed at these sectors.

Velarium Hires New Director of Aftermarket Sales

Velarium, an Airxcel brand, has hired Todd Vice as its director of aftermarket sales.

Vice joins Velarium with 20 years of industry experience managing aftermarket sales of awning products, sanitation products and power systems.

In his new role at Velarium, Vice will work with distributors and dealer partners, attend industry events and trade shows, and work closely with the Velarium team on product development.

"Todd will be instrumental in establishing and accelerating Velarium's aftermarket growth," said Piar Adams, vice president of marketing, aftermarket and international sales for Airxcel. "He brings invaluable experience with awnings as well as the aftermarket landscape, having worked in the aftermarket throughout his career. He is well-positioned to execute our strategy for this growing brand in Airxcel's portfolio."

Commenting on his new position, Vice said, "I've spent my career in the aftermarket working closely with distributors and dealers. From where I started my career at Carefree to working for other aftermarket suppliers providing sanitation or power systems, I've been able to expand and develop relationships with distributors, dealers and retailers. I am excited to leverage my expertise in helping Velarium develop and grow its aftermarket sales of awning products. We are already establishing Velarium as a high-quality brand and I look forward to helping the company develop new products and grow."

Meyer Distributing Announces 2025 RV & Marine Show Dates

Meyer Distributing's upcoming 2025 RV and Marine Mega Show is slated for Jan. 14-15 at Indiana's French Lick Resort and Casino.

"We are incredibly excited to host the 2025 RV & Marine Mega Show at the esteemed French Lick Resort and Casino," said Natalie Tempel, vice president of marketing at Meyer Distributing. "This event serves as a premier platform for our customers to connect with us, see new product offerings and engage with vendors."

The French Lick Resort and Casino, renowned for its elegance and hospitality, is nestled amid the scenic beauty of southern Indiana. Attendees can look forward to an extensive lineup of exhibits, product demonstrations, educational seminars and networking opportunities throughout the two-day event.

"The breakout seminars fill up quickly," said Johnny Hayes, purchasing manager at Meyer Distributing. "Our vendor partners offer great prizes and promotions for coming to learn about their products. I highly anticipate 2025 is going to be bigger and better."

"Come be a part of another record-breaking year for Meyer and we will help you break records in 2025 for your business," said Ben Johnson, RV, Towing & Marine category sales manager at Meyer. "Come join us at the 2025 Meyer RV and Marine Mega Show!"

For exhibitor inquiries, sponsorship opportunities and further information about the 2025 RV and Marine Mega Show, email rvmegashow@meyerdistributing.com.

NTP-STAG Opens New Dallas Distribution Center

NTP-STAG has opened its new distribution center in Dallas.

The expansion addresses the companies' recent growth in the area and further solidifies the commitment to serving customers and suppliers in the South Central region, which includes Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Louisiana and western Arkansas.

The company operates eight distribution centers in addition to 37 cross-docks throughout North America.

"We are thrilled to announce the opening of our new distribution center in Dallas," said Bill Rogers, NTP-STAG president. "This new facility provides for much-needed room and capability that will facilitate our continued expansion in this critical market. All customers should see and feel the benefits."

This new 520,000-square-foot facility is strategically located to enhance NTP-STAG's distribution capabilities while maximizing service levels for both customers and suppliers, the company said. The increased inventory capabilities and optimized delivery schedules from the Dallas

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distribution center will provide support to marine dealers and customers throughout the region.

"We are focused on increasing the support and resources to our valued customers and partners," Rogers said. "With the opening of this new distribution center, we are excited to expand our capabilities and strengthen our presence in the South Central region. This facility underscores our ongoing commitment to driving success and growth for our suppliers and the customers we serve."

Equal-i-zer Hitch Congratulates CEO on 30 Years


Anderson

Equal-i-zer Hitch congratulated CEO Jed Anderson on 30 years with the company.

In its 80 years of business, Equal-i-zer said it has accumulated many seasoned employees who have intensive industry knowledge and brought success to the company and to dealers and users of their products.

Much of the recognition for attracting and keeping the talent at the company belongs to Anderson, Equal-i-zer said, who created a culture of integrity, improvement and industry. Anderson's unique leadership style led to employee retention, which created a talented, experienced team.

In Anderson's 30 years, he has held many positions, from shipping to manufacturing to engineering to sales and marketing.

"Starting my career at the family business over 30 years ago was a wonderful blessing," Anderson said. "Becoming owner, president and CEO gave me, with our team, the opportunity to push our products further than they had ever been before. It is very satisfying to know that by combining sway control into the weight distribution hitch, we revolutionized the hitch industry.

"The superior design and safety of the Equal-i-zer and e2 hitch has protected countless individuals and families in their travels," Anderson said. "This has helped families enjoy the RV journey with a stress-free towing experience. There is great satisfaction in providing the only weight distribution and sway control hitch that is 100% made in America. We have a great team of capable individuals innovating and working hard right here in Provo, Utah, to manufacture and provide the best hitch you can buy. I am thankful that for 30 years I have been a part of supplying jobs that provide for local families and build this great country we call home."

"With a long list of accomplishments, decades of service and a drive to make Equal-i-zer Hitch the safest, best-performing hitch in the world, Anderson has created a legacy," the company said. "Employees and leadership join together to congratulate and thank Anderson for providing exceptional guidance, strategy and support for three decades, and look forward to upholding the culture Anderson has created."

Entegra Coach Homecoming Hosts 500 Attendees

Entegra Coach hosted its annual owner's Homecoming event in May.

This year, nearly 500 luxury diesel coach owners, Entegra Coach staff and suppliers attended to teach and learn about their coaches, celebrate each other and make memories. Approximately 200 coaches arrived at the Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds in Goshen, Indiana, and festivities ran from 8 a.m. May 14 through noon on May 17.

Senior Director of Product Development Pat Carroll held the annual "What's New" session to discuss changes and additions to the 2025 models Tuesday. Owners then walked through a full display of new models and spent one-on-one time with the Entegra Coach sales and product development teams. The evening concluded with a happy hour and a barbecue with campfires, games and music from the band South of Somewhere.

Wednesday was filled with training classes and a vendor fair. The country themed evening began with Entegra Coach ambassadors Anne Klumpp and Jeri and Kenny Saulsbury followed by a management program featuring Trey Miller, vice president of marketing, Nic Martin, vice president of sales, and Ken Walters, president and CEO.

The night continued with music from Nashville's Justin Bryan Band and concluded with the headliner Larry Fleet. Fleet is an Entegra Coach Cornerstone owner and was recently awarded his first certified gold record for his hit single "Where I Find God." He has toured with country music legends including Willie Nelson and Morgan Wallen, and last year sold out Nashville's historic Ryman Auditorium to kick off his own headlining tour.

The evening finished with the tradition of all owners returning to their coaches and turning on their 'C' lights across the fairgrounds.

Training classes resumed and continued throughout the day Thursday. The evening began with Steve Claude, vice president of customer service, introducing the team responsible for servicing coaches and providing technical support throughout the week.

Guests were then treated to a Jimmy Buffett tribute night, which kicked off with steel drums during cocktail hour. Following dinner, Aloha and Fire Dancers gave a memorable performance and held a limbo contest followed by the traditional conga line lead by Director of Customer Service Jacob Shearer. The evening concluded with headliners A1A — the original (and only certified) Jimmy Buffett Cover Band.

Carroll's Suggestion Session was the highlight of Friday, where owners had a chance to provide the product development, engineering, sales and executive teams with feedback on ways to improve coaches for the following model year. At noon, units began to leave the fairgrounds to conclude the 2024 event.

"This week tops our Entegra Coach calendar every year, and this year was no different," Martin said. "The feedback from our owners on this year's event has been extremely positive, and it was great to be able to express our gratitude for their business this week, while seeking and receiving input on how we can continue to improve."

The event was made possible by platinum sponsor Spartan RV Chassis, gold sponsors Lippert, SkyMed and Patrick, and other silver and bronze level sponsors.

Dates for the 2025 Entegra Coach Homecoming event will be May 13-16 at its traditional location, the Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds. RVP

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HOW RV CONSUMERS HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR TOY HAULERS

From 2022 to 2023, there was a 2.67% increase in used toy hauler RVs on RV Trader — and already a 10% uptick in 2024. Based on search result impressions, Alliance RV made this year's Top 5 list of toy hauler makes.*



Top Toy Hauler Makes

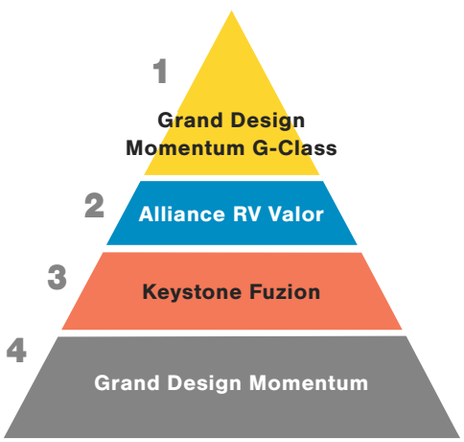
by Search Results on RV Trader

1. **Forest River**
2. **Grand Design**
3. **Keystone RV**
4. **Heartland**
5. **Alliance RV**

Based on search result impressions on RV Trader, Alliance RV has grown to be within the Top 5 makes of toy haulers in 2024. Forest River, Grand Design, Keystone and Heartland have remained in the Top 5 most searched toy hauler makes since 2022.

Top Toy Hauler Makes/Models

by RV Trader Search Results



Based on search results in 2024.

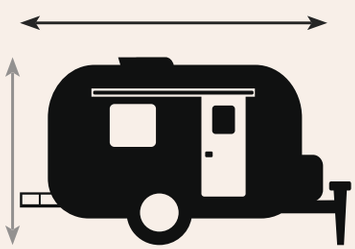
NEW VS. USED Toy Hauler RVs

From 2022 to 2023, there was a 2.67% increase in used toy hauler RVs on RV Trader. In 2024, there has already been an increase of 10% in used toy haulers on RV Trader.

"Buyer loyalty to top brands like Forest River, Grand Design, Keystone and Heartland in the toy hauler market has been unwavering since 2022. This year, however, Alliance RV has surged in interest, marking a notable shift. Models like the Grand Design Momentum G-Class, Alliance RV Valor, Keystone Fuzion and the Grand Design Momentum — particularly pre-owned units with spacious sleeping capacities — are catching attention. This trend underscores specific features driving market demand, highlighting buyers' preferences. Businesses have an opportunity to make the most of these trends in search activity by not only focusing on popular brands but also models that meet these standards for a more targeted strategy."

Source: RV Trader

Top Length Searches for Toy Haulers



The following are the top length searches in feet for toy hauler RVs from January 2024 through April 2024 on RV Trader:

1. **44 feet**
2. **45 feet**
3. **39 feet**
4. **30 feet**
5. **40 feet**

TOP SLEEPING CAPACITY

for Toy Haulers on RV Trader

(Based on Search Results)

Consumers looking for toy hauler RVs are most interested in units with sleeping capacities of an even number.

1. **6**
2. **8**
3. **7**
4. **4**
5. **9**

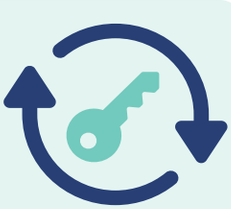


About RV Trader

RV Trader, a part of the renowned "Trader" family of brands and owned by Trader Interactive, is the leading marketplace for advertising RVs, motorhomes and campers. With an average of 6.5 million monthly visitors, RV Trader offers innovative tools to help manufacturers and dealers make connections with customers, increase sales and maximize profits. For more information, visit RVTraderMediaKit.com.

Consumers who have searched for toy haulers on RV Trader have also searched for the following keywords:

- **"Fifth Wheel"**
- **"Used"**
- **"150"**
- **"Travel Trailer"**
- **"Forest River"**



**Data on toy haulers from RV Trader is pulled from January 2024 – April 2024*

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A Last-Minute Change Sets This Toy Hauler Apart

Riverstone's Legacy 4513DST's garage can haul toys, or work as a home office, with a motorized window that wows a crowd.

BY JOHN MCCURRY

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RIVERSTONE



Riverstone's high-end toy hauler, the Legacy 4513DST, has drawn rave reviews since it debuted last fall. The 45-foot-long unit, with a 13-foot-long garage, is at the upper end of toy haulers produced by Forest River.

A relatively last-minute construction tweak in the unit helps ensure its uniqueness. A motorized window was added to the wall separating the garage from the rest of the unit. That addition has added to the unit's appeal in a major way, says Nick Simeri, product manager.

"When we first built it, there was no window in the wall," Simeri says. "It wasn't until August that we decided to change it. We had a cabinet on that wall and decided to add a window. So we went from an idea to tearing the wall apart and having a motorized window in two weeks."

Simeri says the Riverstone Legacy 4513DST probably appeals most to customers who have a toy or two, but it doesn't check every box for "real hard-core" toy hauler buyers.

"Riverstone is a luxury fifth-wheel brand, and obviously there is a need in the market for a luxury fifth wheel with an actual garage in it. Our target customers are not necessarily your side-by-side desert guys, but more of a Can-Am Spyder or two motorcycles people."

The 4513DST has been available at dealers since late 2023. Their feedback has been positive so far, and they have been pleased with customer reaction.

"Guys who have been stocking it have been turning it quickly," Simeri says. "It is something unique in the market, and people like the floorplan. There really is not a floorplan like it in the market, especially when you add all that with our core construction. Very few people are building a 3-inch wall."

EYE-CATCHING FEATURES

One popular option Riverstone offers is a MORryde independent suspension installed at Riverstone's factory. MORryde comes



THE TOUGH RV MARKET OF THE PAST YEAR OR SO HAS PUSHED MANUFACTURERS ACROSS THE SPECTRUM TO BE BETTER AND MORE CREATIVE TO ACCOMMODATE BUYERS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS.

to the factory and aligns each unit with a mobile alignment machine. "That's something very few are doing from the factory," Simeri says.

Standard features include a generator with a 30-gallon tank and a 30-gallon fuel station. Forest River will build about 75 to 100 of the new model this year, according to Simeri. The Legacy package has an MRSP of $219,453.

The model comes with a king bed in the front and a drop-down queen bed in the garage. Also standard are four slideouts and two awnings.

The model drew considerable attention at the Hershey RV Show last September and at the Florida RV Supershow in Tampa in January, plus several smaller shows. "Consumers were excited about it," Simeri says. "It was something they hadn't seen before. I believe we sold them at every show we had them at."

The model was also on display at the Open House in Elkhart last year, and Simeri hopes to show it there again this year. It has also drawn accolades, including RV PRO's Model of the Year for 2024.

AN EVOLVING MARKET

Overall, the toy hauler market is evolving. Toy preferences change with some regularity. This keeps this segment of the RV industry highly competitive. Simeri says the tough RV market of the past year or so has pushed manufacturers across the spectrum to be better and more creative to accommodate buyers with specific needs.

"The toy hauler market is an area that is especially being pushed," he says. "Toy hauler buyers may be looking for some bells and whistles, but they are also looking at the utility of the vehicle. There are only so many options. Toy hauler buyers have more specific needs than a lot of campers. It's causing the toy hauler guys to step back and take a look at their products."

Usability continues to be a big selling point. Customers



like the various possibilities of how to use the garage.

"Ultimately, if a customer is putting a side-by-side or two Harleys in the back, they have a specific need to be met while still trying to have comfort. When you get to the upper price point, more than ever the buyer is looking for a luxury unit."

LISTENING TO FEEDBACK

Upgrades and changes will be the result of meticulous research. Riverstone collects feedback on its units in a variety of ways. For instance, Simeri attended an owners rally in May held by one of its dealers. He conducted a roundtable with owners to listen to their experiences with their units. Simeri also is responsible for a



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full sales territory and regularly works consumer shows, another valuable way to gauge customer experience.

"That hands-on experience with consumers provides immediate feedback. You can't go back to the drawing board, but if something continually is mentioned, then it's time to go look at what we are doing and figure out how to do it better and meet expectations of our customers. It's important to take all of that knowledge into consideration."

Two wood color options are available. In the 2025 model year, a dark brown will be available for cabinet colors. Riverstone stays on top of color trends by consulting suppliers and keeping a close watch on the housing market. Simeri says he also pays attention to people posting on social media about buying used units, refitting them and reselling them.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE HAULING

What toys are popular these days? Simeri says motorcycles remain high on the list, as do Can-Am Spyders and golf carts. Side-by-sides are common out West.

"Your traditional toys are still the toys we see," he says. "Some customers are buying it because they spend six to eight months in it and want to have space for a grill, bikes or a kayak. There are more people who are using it as a garage as opposed to hauling a single toy than people realize."

In somewhat of a surprise, a significant number of extended stay customers who can work remotely prefer to retrofit the garage space into an office by installing desks.

IN SOMEWHAT OF A SURPRISE, A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF EXTENDED STAY CUSTOMERS WHO CAN WORK REMOTELY PREFER TO RETROFIT THE GARAGE SPACE INTO AN OFFICE BY INSTALLING DESKS.

So, what type of vehicle does it take to pull this large unit? Simeri says the core buyers use a one-ton dually pickup. There are some that even buy semis to pull it, with some rigging the semi to carry a smart car on the semi in front of the fifth wheel, he says.

The combination of unique features has helped propel the model's early success. Simeri cites the 3-inch wall, along with more insulation, which has great appeal for extended-stay customers.

"At the end of the day, it's a floorplan no one else is building," Simeri says. "We are keeping the same construction and quality components that people have come to know from Riverstone, which also helps us stand out in the toy hauler world." RVP

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DEALER FINDS SPECIALIZING PAYS OFF

Owner Derek Bryant of Campers Union in North Carolina turns his passion for going off-grid into a creative dealership model.

BY MIKE HARBOUR

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAMPERS UNION



Many dealerships abide by a list of rules, some written and some unwritten, but Campers Union isn't most dealerships.

The store, located just outside of Goldsboro, North Carolina, isn't open six days a week (it's closed Sunday and Monday). It isn't offering anything that can't be towed behind a half-ton truck (think lightweight adventure trailers). It isn't even located on a busy road (try a cul-de-sac). Yet, for the things Campers Union isn't, there's a lot of things it is, says owner Derek Bryant, whose young business only opened late last year.

"The concept was not to be just a place to go buy campers," he says. "We've got a full-service shop where we do overland builds, lifts, suspension systems, airbags, wheels and tires, roof racks, rooftop tents, as well as the capability of doing some more off-grid type setups. We do a ton of solar work, DC-to-DC charging inverters, massive lithium power banks, things like that. We really want to be the one-stop shop for off-roading, overlanding and off-grid builds."

Bryant, who's built and raced cars and trucks for most of his life, definitely isn't risk-adverse, but starting such a unique business was tough.

"I chose a time to open a camper dealership where there was a record number of dealers going out of business. A lot of them made a lot of inventory mistakes and were just overwhelmed at the end of '22 and into '23 when the interest rates went up. Curtailments and interest were killing them," he says. "Meanwhile, I came bopping out and said, 'Hey, I want to open a new store.' As you can expect, banks were not exactly thrilled or behind me on that idea."

Thankfully, Bryant, a Colorado native who relocated to the Tarheel State almost 25 years ago, wasn't new to the industry. Previously employed by an RV dealer group for four years following more than two decades in automotive aftermarket performance, he built relationships that allowed him to secure two small floorplans — one for new units, one for used. Pouring his savings into Campers Union was a decision he based partly on numbers.

"About a year before I left, I really started digging into the metrics of the overland side of things. I did this a lot when I was with Turbonetics. One of the biggest trend indicators is when you start seeing large manufacturers in the auto world making brand- or model-specific vehicles that cater to a certain market," Bryant says.



"They've got millions of dollars in research and development that we don't have access to, so you can see when Toyota starts making an overland model or they really start pushing their TRD Pro stuff and when Nissan really starts pushing their Frontier PRO-4Xs and starts touting winches and lifts, you begin to see the trends from the top down."

INVESTING IN A PERSONAL PASSION

Emotion clearly was the other part of Bryant's decision to strike out on his own.

"The idea of going to an RV park was never really appealing to me, but the idea of being able to get out there and hit trails and camp under the stars, like I did when



Owner Derek Bryant wants Campers Union to be a one-stop shop for off-roading and overlanding.



Service Manager Joey Eastwood (far right) and Parts Manager Aaron Lovelace (inner right) with customers.



Owner Derek Bryant



Aaron Lovelace, left, and Joey Eastwood

I was a kid, was," he says. "We would just drive up into the Rockies, and we'd find a couple of spots that were the emergency runoffs for trucks when you're up in the mountains. My buddy had a Suzuki Samurai, my other buddy had an Isuzu Amigo, and we would just drive up those runoffs. There was a couple we had found trails on, and they were just nowhere. I mean, it's just land out there, and we would randomly take trips where we'd grab tents and go. Being away from the city and seeing the stars and kind of being off-grid, which wasn't a thing back then, resonated with me ever since."

That's why Campers Union stocks units from Ember RV, Forest River's IBEX, OPUS Camper USA, TAXA Outdoors and, since January, Mission Overland. Bryant not only likes and uses them, but also believes they deserve a proper setting.

"Many of these manufacturers are represented on plenty of RV lots, but they're never the main focus," Bryant says. "We like putting them face forward. We like saying, 'No, this is exactly what we do.' We want people to beat on these things. We want them to take them on trails. We want to find out what breaks so we can upgrade and make them better. We resonate better with that customer. So, when it comes to choosing the inventory, it's not just about what I would like being an enthusiast, but what I think is going to be quality for my customers, the brands that are going to work with me, plus hear my feedback and listen to the feedback of the customers and grow with us."

And the dealership definitely is growing — from when the doors opened in mid-August to the end of 2023, Campers Union sold 25 units. This year, sales already reached the low 30s by early May. He's able to keep 30 to 35 units in stock, and that number is increasing daily. Like most dealers, Bryant carefully chooses his inventory.

"The downside, I suppose, to the smaller manufacturers, is they don't have the difference in floorplans; most of these companies carry three to four to five. Obviously, IBEX and Ember have a few more than that, for sure, but we're trying to keep it relatively spread out and fair amongst what we carry," he says. "We're a little bit limited by the companies that we do focus on, but it's also nice, too, because we get more intimately acquainted with each of the models and know them better individually."

One thing that doesn't keep Bryant up at night, at least for now, is space. In June 2023, he leased a 30,000-square-foot building on a gated 6-acre tract in a cul-de-sac northwest of town. The structure, formerly home to a gun shop and indoor shooting range, is roughly divided in half and mostly open space. One side contains the showroom and parts store while the other side houses Bryant's service department, complete with carpet and air conditioning. Each side can comfortably accommodate 10 to 12 units.

WEARING MANY HATS

What does keep Bryant concerned is staffing. He has six employees and could use a few more, especially sales staff and technicians.

"I originally started this plan about February of last year, but the first place that I found fell through," he says. "So, it took a little bit longer to get open than we had anticipated, and by the time we opened in August, we were already moving into the end of the season. Everyone was in their new model changeover, so there wasn't a lot of inventory out there."

Consequently, some of his first employees chose to leave for greener pastures, a situation Bryant, himself a husband and father, fully understood. He's slowly rebuilding his team and even though he's got a sales and finance manager, as well as managers over parts and service, they join forces when necessary.

"It's not uncommon for me, my parts guy and my service guy to be installing whatever we need. We just did a full off-grid build on a customer's unit recently before they headed out to Moab," he says. "We put full solar, a full lithium power bank,

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all sorts of stuff on there. We put some rear bags on his Jeep — the full gamut. We all pitched in. Some days, I'm detailing campers, some days I'm having interviews or talking to new potential employees, some days, I'm selling campers — I'm doing whatever I can to help out."

Bryant uses an hourly pay structure in his shop, something he believes is more fair than the flat-rate system used by his previous employer, because he wants his techs to have more freedom when diagnosing issues and creating better solutions.

"With flat rate, you can lose some of that because it becomes more about the work you can turn and burn versus really putting your best foot forward, so if we manage it and plan it right, they'll care about their work and I don't really need to push them to make the hours," he says. "If I hire the right person, they'll be doing the job I want them to do anyway, regardless, and I'd much rather pay everyone what they're worth."

A TEAM MENTALITY

He's adamant about ensuring Campers Union doesn't have an "island feel" among the departments.

"The island feel is when the service guys stick with the service guys, the parts guys stick with the parts guys, the sales guys stick with the sales guys and everybody hates each other," Bryant says. "Cohesion is definitely one of the things we preach here. Both my service and parts managers share the same counter — we all pitch in. Everybody's got input because I feel like if we can't get along, that's going to be conveyed to the customer almost instantaneously."

When Bryant created his concept, he wanted Campers Union to be a mashup of retailers 4 Wheel Parts and REI, as well as an RV dealership. That's why, in addition to selling trailers and doing automotive work, he stocks rooftop tents, roof racks, lithium batteries and other items not found in many RV parts stores.

"It's amazing how many dealers in the RV business that I've met that just absolutely detest parts and service," he says. "I think being diversified in what you can offer not only strengthens the base of your company but strengthens it for your customer base. If you can do more for your customer, they're more likely to come to you and trust you on more things. You help build a better name that way."

Bryant's priorities since opening was straightforward: build RV sales first and then concentrate on modifying tow vehicles, but he's had to change his plan.

"We're now focusing heavily on more of the parts upgrades for the RVs. We're averaging about a $5,000 upgrade on just about every unit we sell because they're so planned out. Our customers are happy to see that we carry Battle Born, Canbat, Renogy and Victron batteries because these [are] companies they've seen on other campers or they've been doing research on.

"The fact is we have them here when no one else even remotely close to us has this stuff. It gives them a more hands-on feel with it. It lets them explore it a little bit more and be more involved in it," he says. "The populace is telling us there's an underserved market."

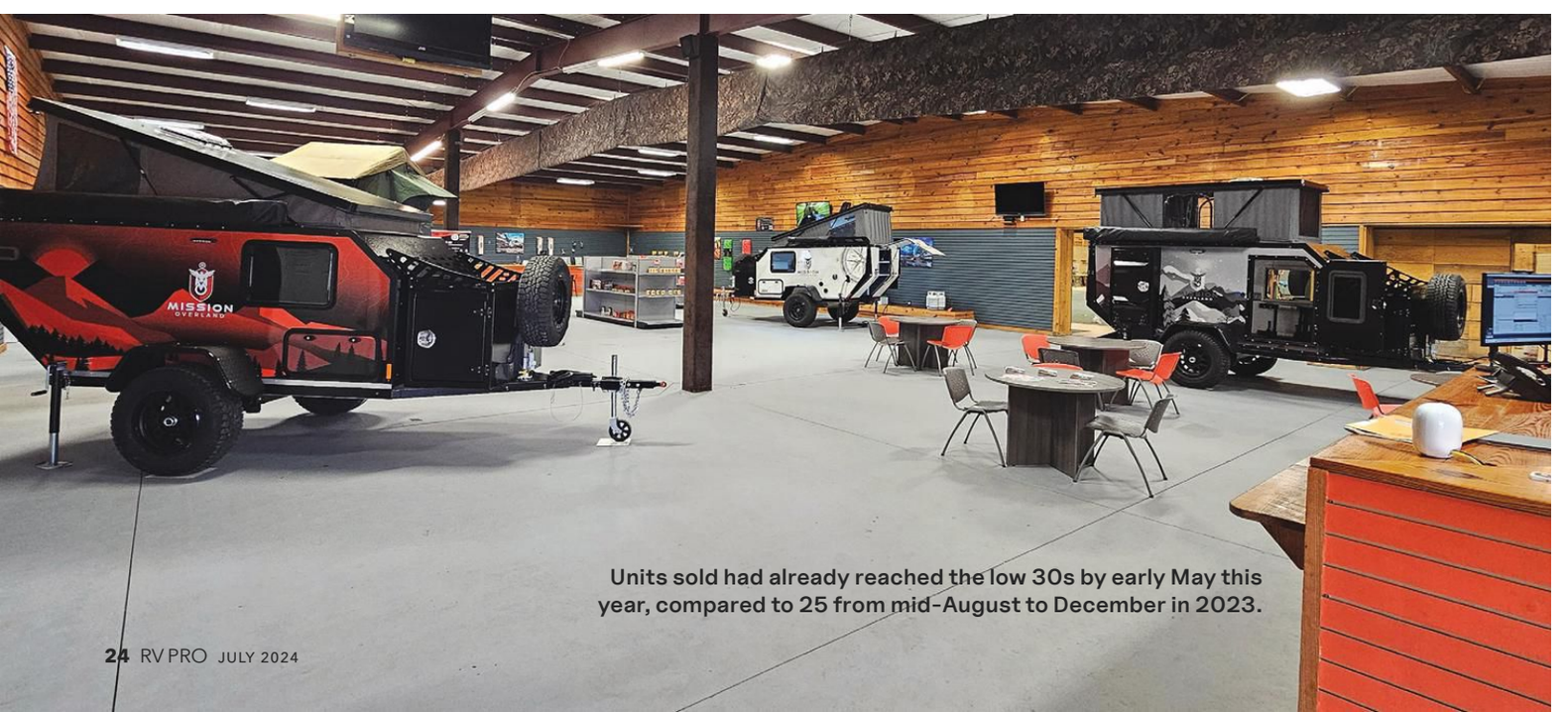
About half his customers already have an idea of what they want while the other half are upsold during walkthroughs, Bryant says. He also makes sure customers receive plenty of free swag, too. Besides stickers and trucker hats, they also get candles from his mother's candle company that contain a special beeswax with a higher melting point to survive life in an RV.

With Campers Union nearing its first anniversary, Bryant plans on a renegotiated floorplan double his present amount. That'll allow him to get closer to stocking 50 units or so and move about 15 to 20 a month.

"The idea is not to get so big that we fall back into the same dealership patterns. I feel like, in order to stay a little bit more intimate, a little bit more connected with our customers, we need the time to upgrade and work on these things far more than you do on a regular RV," he says.

Ultimately, if Campers Union takes off as Bryant intends, the concept will move beyond Goldsboro.

"Our five-year plan is to get two to three stores put together where we have everything dialed in down pat, and we can use our buying power for all our parts and our manufacturer experience to help make this a franchisable opportunity," he says. "From day one, it's always been about a repeatable process that we can take this underserved market and find another underserved market just like it." RVP



Units sold had already reached the low 30s by early May this year, compared to 25 from mid-August to December in 2023.



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Chassis Supplier: Service Capabilities Should be Top of Mind

Jeff Wertz, national sales manager for Spartan RV Chassis, on what's new with the nearly 40-year-old company and the difference in being American-made.

BY JENNIFER KING

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPARTAN RV CHASSIS

When you look up Spartan RV Chassis online, the tagline right on the homepage of the website says "the foundation of exceptional adventures."

This tagline makes sense, since the chassis is what brings motorcoaches like Spartan's customers Newmar, Entegra and more to life.

The idea behind each Spartan chassis is to be dependable, safe and deliver on performance — all while being American-made in the company's headquarters in Michigan.

RV PRO asked Jeff Wertz, national sales manager for Spartan RV Chassis, to tell us more about what to expect this year, and why service is of utmost importance.



Jeff Wertz



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The Tri-Pod Steering Wheel is standard on the 2024 Foretravel Motorcoach Realm FS605 and Realm Presidential.

Q: Can you give us an update on what Spartan has been working on in the last year? What new products or innovations have been in development?

A: Over the past year, Spartan RV Chassis has focused on advancing our proprietary technologies to enhance the luxury travel experience. Key developments include refining our Premier Drive suspension system for superior ride and handling, updating our Connected Coach suite with an enhanced digital dash and advanced safety features, and expanding our Red Diamond aftermarket parts and solutions for top-tier maintenance and customization.

We've also introduced an industry-leading warranty: a five-year, 100,000-mile fully transferable warranty, combined with our exclusive 20-year unlimited-mile warranty on frame rails and cross members. This is now available for Newmar, Entegra and Foretravel models.



A 2024 Newmar model featuring the Tri-Pod Steering Wheel.


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Entegra's Cornerstone is built on the 45-foot Spartan RV Chassis K3 605



Q: Tell me how things are going with the K3 525 — what has the reception been like with Newmar and their end users? Has anything developed with the model since it was introduced last year?

A: The K3 525 has been well-received by Newmar and their end users. We've received positive feedback on its performance and ride quality. The additional horsepower further enhances the driving experience for owners looking at 38-foot to 45-foot coaches.

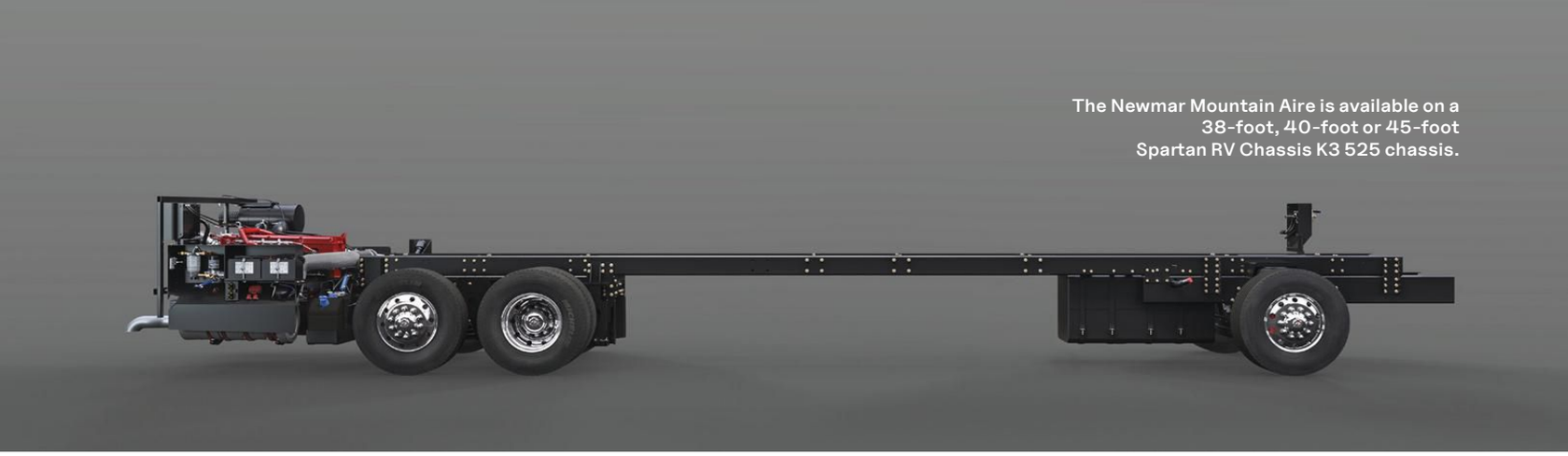
Q: How has this year been so far, facing economic headwinds and the RV market's slowdown since the high of the pandemic years?

A: This year has had its challenges with economic headwinds and a market slowdown. However, the increased RV ownership during the pandemic is expected to boost demand for service and repairs, driving growth opportunities. Our launch of the Red Diamond brand is aimed at enhancing service capabilities to meet these evolving needs.

Q: Have there been any lingering challenges with the supply chain into this year, or has that mostly been corrected?

A: While supply chain disruptions have largely stabilized, occasional challenges still arise. We continue to address these issues to ensure consistent quality and delivery of our products. The pandemic-related spike in demand for RVs will soon lead to increased demand for service and repairs, prompting service centers to carefully





The Newmar Mountain Aire is available on a 38-foot, 40-foot or 45-foot Spartan RV Chassis K3 525 chassis.

assess their volume, staffing and inventory needs.

Q. Tell me about the service centers that are certified in Spartan chassis — how does Spartan work with those locations?

A: Spartan RV Chassis has hundreds of authorized service centers across North America. These centers are trained to handle maintenance and repairs. Dealerships must undergo a rigorous training program through our Spartan RV Chassis Technician Training to become certified, ensuring consistency in service quality.

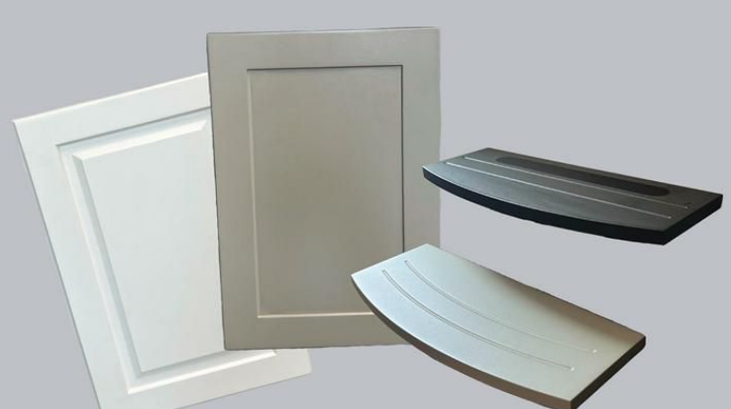
Q. As a supplier, what are qualities you believe Spartan possesses that make it a good partner?

A: Spartan RV Chassis is committed to delivering a luxury travel experience through innovation, quality and customer support. We value feedback from our customers and partners, which drives our continuous improvement. Our focus is on providing a luxury ride with superior handling, enhanced safety, exceptional quality and durability, and first-class service and protection. RVP

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ARTICLE & PHOTOS BY DRAGONFLY ENERGY



As RV ownership continues its surge in popularity among diverse audiences, the demand for improvements in efficiency and reliability in the vehicle's sources of power has reached a fever pitch.

In fact, industry reports show that the 2023 RV battery market was valued at $10.4 billion and is expected to reach $32.7 billion by the end of 2030 — representing a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of almost 219%.

Technological advancements have paved the way for lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO4) batteries to emerge as an eco-friendly choice for RV energy storage. Lithium-ion batteries have changed the RV battery landscape due to their increased energy density, extended life span, improved safety, temperature tolerance and faster charging capabilities.

The problem? China has a profound stranglehold on battery production, leaving the battery market potentially dependent on Chinese manufacturers and suppliers. Bloomberg reports that China's battery makers supply some 80% of cells worldwide, backed by a mining and processing supply chain that increasingly resides in that country's hands.

Economic & National Security Risks

Chinese dominance of the lithium battery market represents a significant challenge to the United States' economy. Given exponential increases in demand — a U.S. Department of Energy Industry Report projects that the market for lithium battery cells in the U.S. will expand 500% to reach $55 billion per year by 2030 — the U.S. domestic economy should benefit. Yet it's estimated that under current conditions, U.S. companies and U.S. workers will capture less than 30% of the value of lithium battery cells consumed domestically. In contrast, China captures 90% of the value of each lithium battery cell consumed in China.

So, despite massive growth in lithium battery demand, the U.S. remains import-dependent, relying on a global lithium battery supply chain that is highly vulnerable to disruption.

Additionally, there's a risk to our national security. Lawmakers, defense officials and national security experts are calling for increased measures to protect against potential cyberespionage related to foreign-made technologies, according to an article in the Atlantic Council.

Energy storage systems like batteries have the potential to collect, transmit and store sensitive information, including biometric data like fingerprints and voice recordings, vehicle location, sensor data and images, financial information and vehicle information. These foreign-made technologies could potentially enable the Chinese government or other foreign organizations to access sensitive personal data of Americans and insight into critical U.S. infrastructure, presenting unacceptable national security risks.

The Domestic Lithium Battery Solution

Major players in the battery landscape are racing to be the first with a solution to shore up the production process here in the U.S. The challenge has been finding a sustainable solution to domestic lithium battery production, honoring local communities' needs and capabilities, while being widely implementable and cost-effective when producing at the scale the market demands.



Given that some of the world's largest lithium deposits are located right here in the U.S., abundant domestic resources are available to propel this important industry shift.

Dry Electrode Manufacturing

One solution is a new, patented technological process developed by Dragonfly Energy in Reno, Nevada. The process involves dry depositing the anode and cathode electrodes during battery manufacturing.

By successfully dry-depositing lithium iron phosphate anode and cathode electrodes, the company has proved it can produce, at scale, American-made lithium battery cells.

The success of the pilot line shows exceptional scalability and reveals performance at a level sufficient to support large-scale production while at the same time being a toxin-free and environmentally friendly process.

Advantages of Dry-Deposition Process

A dry electrode battery manufacturing process serves the overarching mission of reducing the cost of energy storage and establishing a closed-loop domestic supply chain.

Here are three of the advantages realized in this new process:

1. **Economical and eco-friendly —** This process, highlighted by the use of nontoxic solvents, also features a 22% smaller manufacturing footprint, is 25% less energy-intensive and boasts a 9% reduced carbon footprint when compared to conventional manufacturing methods.
2. **Effectively translates to other applications —** This process is chemistry agnostic, meaning it can be applied to diverse uses across a variety of lithium chemistries — including domestically producing nonflammable LiFePO4 storage batteries.
3. **Space savings —** Dragonfly Energy has been able to reduce the manufacturing footprint required to produce lithium-ion battery cells by eliminating the need for large, energy-intensive equipment such as slurry coaters, conveyor dryers and solvent reclamation equipment.





This reduction in energy and space is expected to meaningfully reduce the environmental impact of future battery production.

Paving the Way for Improved Processes & Domestic Self-Reliance

The domestic manufacturing of lithium batteries will result in not only the advantages outlined above but also increased economic growth, job creation and enhanced national security.

The lithium battery industry must continue making steps toward producing fully American-made lithium batteries and eliminating reliance on foreign manufacturers.

With demand for lithium batteries skyrocketing, American-made lithium cells will bolster the national economy and shepherd the nation toward energy independence.

Dry electrode manufacturing may be the game-changing solution to a healthy domestic battery pipeline — and to safe, efficient, reliable batteries powering our nation's RVs. RVP



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Learning from seasoned pros gives the RV industry a solid foundation.

BY JORDAN BENSCHOP, JAVACIA HARRIS BOWSER, MICHELE MOORE & RONNIE WENDT

Change is good but requires seasoned professionals to lead the way. Nowhere is this more true than in the RV industry, where advances in technology coupled with economic headwinds require a balanced approach that only industry veterans are poised to lead.

With decades of experience, this year's honored industry professionals are well-prepared to navigate challenges and opportunities to shape a promising future for the RV industry.

Tracy Anglemeyer

Vice President of Sales & Marketing
Thetford

34 years in the industry



Tracy Anglemeyer oversees all sales and marketing functions at Thetford, which focuses on RV, trucking and camping sanitation products. Her duties include marketing, OEM and aftermarket sales, inside sales and customer service. As she carries out these tasks, she consistently demonstrates an exceptional level of leadership and dedication, making her worthy of recognition as an industry veteran.

Tracy has played a key role in opening up new opportunities for growth and achievement through innovative programs and initiatives. These forward-thinking strategies have not only improved Thetford's industry position but also changed how it operates.

Tracy's impact extends beyond organizational changes, as she has dedicated herself to mentoring through the RV Women's Alliance (RVWA). She has been highly influential in fostering talent and potential within the Thetford team and the RV industry.

By leading teams and guiding projects effectively, she consistently achieves outstanding results. No matter what obstacles come her way, she's always committed to helping the organization meet its goals.

Her wealth of experience manifests itself daily in many impressive ways. One is evident in how she effectively manages diversity within her team. Tracy draws from years of experience in navigating diverse work cultures to create a more inclusive and productive environment, helping team members embrace innovative and time-tested practices for the best possible outcomes.

Tracy is a true industry trailblazer, defining excellence and driving growth and innovation. Her rich experience has played a pivotal role in her ability to reshape practices and redefine norms, for the betterment of the entire industry.

Over the years, she says she has watched the RV industry grow dramatically and change diversely. She adds that she cherishes having been a part of many of those changes.

"Those of us who have been around for a few decades have witnessed the growth and consolidation that has occurred in all segments, from manufacturing, to dealerships, campgrounds, banking, suppliers, etc.," she says. "We have been a part of the Louisville shows and bringing that to Elkhart, the launch of Go RVing and wearing our green ribbons, RVAA joining in with RVIA, the launch of RVWA, joining in on committee week in D.C., adding new committees such as emerging leaders and community events, and more. We have weathered international conflicts, been aided and hurt by atmospheric conditions, stormed through economic downturns, and still came out the other side stronger in our unity. It is my belief that we have been able to do this because of the people and leadership in this great and unique industry."

Tracy appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with exceptional leaders on a wide range of initiatives each day. "It is the people that I remember most," she says. "The industry wouldn't be where it is today without these great people."

As Tracy looks to the future, she does so while looking at the past. She explains, "The RV industry continually looks toward the future while learning from past experiences."

She explains it is a dynamic and ever-evolving industry, "driven by the changing needs and adaptations of our customers. Our goal is to provide campers with the best possible experience, which spans across various aspects such as the campsite, the RV itself, the buying experience, the latest features, and ensuring more land is designated for camping."

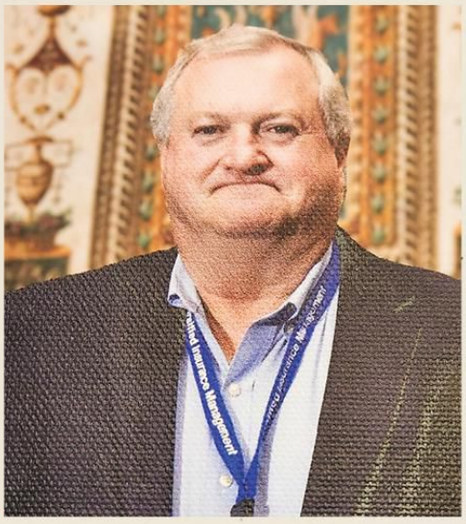
She adds that the RV industry's ability to "withstand numerous external factors hinges on our unity, a collective strength we have demonstrated time and again. Presently and moving forward, I foresee greater unity and collaboration around emerging opportunities, with increased conversations and proactive measures focused on the industry's collective future."

Tracy says she envisions the RV industry exploring and diversifying into other industries, which will, in turn, fortify it. "The future holds great promise," she says. "Though we will encounter bumps in the road, our resilience ensures that we will persevere and emerge stronger."

Eric Sharp

General Manager
East to West — Forest River

40 years in the industry



As general manager of East to West with Forest River, Eric Sharp monitors all business aspects, including production, purchasing, sales and warranty. He's done an amazing job making sure East to West products are of the highest quality.

These achievements make him deserving of RV PRO's industry veteran title, but it's his willingness to coach and share his 40 years of management experience with anyone who's willing to listen that will secure a successful future for the industry.

Eric mentors others, sharing his vast knowledge of the RV business and the many connections he has developed over the years. His drive pushes others to take pride in what they do and to always do their best. Employees say, "The team here at East to West knows we can always go to the 'General' for advice."

East to West team members say Eric has never let his success get to his head and stays grounded, putting his family first. They say he tells them his greatest accomplishment is being a grandfather.

Employees also share that Eric never loses sight of the main goal, which is to give the best product to East to West customers, and he makes sure his employees remember it, too. He is famous for telling employees, "We started this company to be different and to raise the bar. We have, but we are not done yet."

Eric reports his greatest memories of the four decades he has spent in the industry center on the great people he has met and worked with.

"The industry has changed so much since I first started over 40 years ago! I think we will continue to see improvements being made in the product, with quality being of primary importance," he says.

Jason Fitzgerald

Co-Owner
Arrowhead Camper Sales

52 years in the industry



Jason Fitzgerald, co-owner of Arrowhead Camper Sales in Mayfield, Kentucky, sold his first camper when he was only 12 years old. Arrowhead is a family company in every sense. Jason's parents started the business in 1972 but had to work other jobs while getting the business off the ground. That meant Jason later had to step in and put the business first to help keep his parents' dream alive.

Today, Jason co-owns the business with his sister, Teresa. Jason's two children, Collin and Torie, work at Arrowhead, as do his sister's husband and daughter. Nearly everyone at Arrowhead is related. And those who aren't are still treated like family. Perhaps that's why there's so little turnover at Arrowhead. And when employees do leave, they often return to work part time.

Jason is a company owner who's in the trenches of the day-to-day operations. He helps with inventory management, sales, service, customer relations, taxes and accounting. Most notably, Jason creates a custom walk-through video for each customer. These videos are typically one or two hours long and cover every detail of the unit, going above and beyond what one might find in a run-of-the-mill owner's manual.

"The custom walk-through videos are where his experience is truly shown," Collin Fitzgerald says. "Customers are absolutely amazed at the number of things he has seen or experienced over the years. They sincerely appreciate the fact that a dealership's co-owner is willing to take the time to make a video for each and every customer!"

Jason, with his 52 years of experience in the RV industry, knows that for most business owners there are no days off. He often runs into customers after-hours and is happy to help when they have questions.

Despite the demands of being co-owner of Arrowhead, Jason still finds time to serve as a deacon at his church. He's also served on the board for New Pathways for Children, a youth social services program in Kentucky, and he's a major supporter of Western Kentucky Youth Camp.

Kevin Lipinski

Sales Representative
Land 'N' Sea Distributing Inc.
39 years in the industry



Kevin Lipinski started at Land 'N' Sea as a warehouse worker in 1985, when the company was still Bell Distribution. Within six months, the company offered him a position in the RV inside sales department. Today, Kevin wears many hats, but customer service and technical support are always top of mind.

Fellow employees say he's always there to help. If a customer needs help finding a component part, Kevin takes time to help them. Kevin's focus on building relationships with his dealer base as well as with Land 'N' Sea vendor partners makes him stand out as an industry veteran. Not long ago, one of his dealers had a delivery issue and wouldn't get the part they needed in time for their customer to pick up their new unit. Kevin drove to the warehouse and delivered the part the same day so the dealer wouldn't lose the deal.

Kevin's commitment to customers and dealers stems from his genuine desire to build lasting relationships. He explains, "I enjoy getting to know my customers. After you've been working with them as long as I have, they become your family.

"It's always fun when they call, and you can hear the appreciation in their voice when you help them solve their problems. It's the best feeling in the world!"

Peers describe Kevin as a true team player. He contributes in any way he can, whether it's helping with order entry, answering calls or brainstorming with others. His critical thinking skills and ability to recognize market trends at a distributor and retail level also make him a great asset.

Kevin mentors his peers and serves as a sounding board for the Land 'N' Sea leadership team. Company leaders rely on his insight when looking for feedback on new internal processes as well as "go-to" market strategies.

Lipinski says he remembers how other dealers helped him learn the industry and wants to pay it forward. "I had some excellent teachers (my customers), and it took years to fully grasp the parts selling side of the business," he says. "It's not a business market you can just come in and pick up quickly. With my customers' help, and patience, we grew together. Now, it feels like they are all an extended part of my family."

He adds he is optimistic about the RV industry's future. "The demographics of RVers has really changed (and is still changing). It used to be retirees who were the main retail customer," he says. "Now, you have families homeschooling their children and turning their RV into a home and a classroom. The longer I'm in the RV industry, the greater the target market becomes. Lots of opportunities here to grow."

Randy Baskerville

Sales Representative – Wildwood division
Forest River
40+ years in the industry



As a sales representative for Forest River's Wildwood division, Randy Baskerville manages the company's network of dealer partners in his territory.

In addition to maintaining relationships with dealerships, Randy has held lifelong friendships with customers and the OEM's service, parts and warranty teams.

His professional approach has always been the "definition of above and beyond," his colleagues say. He has a relentless travel schedule, is thoughtful when helping Forest River's partners, and has an acute attention to detail and an unwavering hustle.

Randy learned a lot from his father, Joel Baskerville, who was also in the RV industry for many years. He has relationships with dealer partners that go back to the founding of their now highly successful companies.

Randy still believes in answering every phone call and email as quick as humanly possible, even while on a boat out on Lake Wawasee in Indiana's Kosciusko County.

In addition to his work ethic, he helped develop and was a mentor for countless men and women in the RV industry. Without any assignment or a "plan," Randy's son, R. Mark Baskerville, says his dad has taught him and so many others valuable lessons on the ins and outs of the RV business.

Outside of the office, Randy is known to be a great family man. He loves his wife, JoEllen, dearly and his kids and grandkids as well.

Curt Richardson

Director of Inspection Services
RV Industry Association

35 years in the industry



As director of inspection services for the RV Industry Association (RVIA), Curt Richardson manages and supports a team of full-time, in-field standards inspectors, the inspection program and all standards committee activities.

He represents the industry as a principal committee member on both CMP-7 for the National Electric Code and the National Fire Protection Association 1192. Curt manages the inspection services provided to RVIA member manufacturers, which includes monitoring the team's performance quality, reviewing inspection reports, managing administrative documents, providing continual training and technical support, and developing and administering career improvement incentives.

Curt has been a constant in the RVIA Standards Department for over 35 years, doing everything from plant inspections to directing the updating of over 500 safety-related RV standards through the many standard setting approval processes.

His peers describe him as never too busy to help a member with a question or explain a standard. They say that his dedication to constant betterment of industry standards has led to improved safety across the entire RV industry.

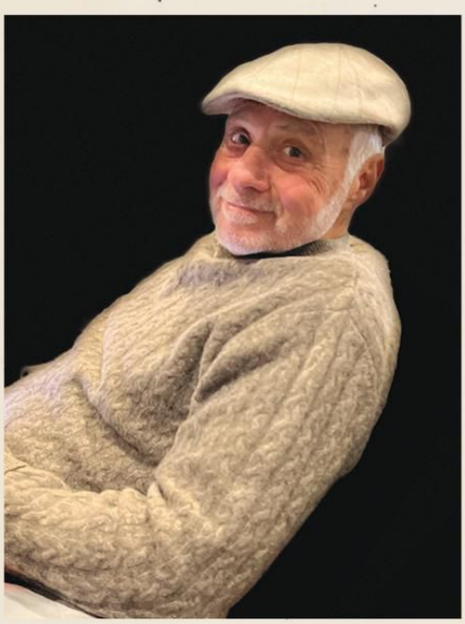
Over the past five years, the RVIA standards team has seen transitions as veteran team members retired. Curt has taken on the responsibility of supporting and mentoring every new team member to ensure a smooth transition and transfer of knowledge.

His efforts have not gone unnoticed, as his coworkers describe him as "excellent at his job" and "one of the kindest people" they know. They report he genuinely wants to help people and works hard to answer every inquiry he receives the same day he receives it.

Gerald Vince

President/Founder
The RV Shop Inc.

52 years in the industry



Gerald Vince has been in the RV business his entire adult life. He got his start 52 years ago as a technician, entering the industry with zeal and an eagerness to learn. Today he's the founder and president of The RV Shop, Inc. in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Despite being the owner of the company, Gerald isn't afraid to get in the trenches to get the job done. At nearly 74 years old, he's still hands-on with many of the day-to-day operations of his business. His colleagues call him "innovative" and note that he's a problem-solver and a pioneer in the industry.

Through the years, Gerald has built many unique units for customers from the ground up, including handicap-accessible units (long before laws from the Americans with Disabilities Act were in place), all-terrain RVs, mobile classrooms and even a Crisis Pregnancy unit.

Gerald believes in leading by example. He's done practically every job in the business and has taught others how to execute those jobs with excellence. Furthermore, his love for the RV industry and his commitment to offering his customers top-notch service are contagious. Most of his employees embody the same dedication to the job and work with a sense of purpose, thanks to Gerald's leadership. He has hired, trained and mentored many technicians that have remained with the company for 20 years or longer. In fact, one technician at The RV Shop has been with the company for 45 years. Beyond creating a corporate culture of unity, Gerald seeks to nurture a sense of family among his team members.

"Looking back over my 52 years in this blessed lifestyle and industry, one of the things I always go back to is the relationship I built with people along the way," Gerald says.

Many of his customers have his cell number and call him at the first sign of any RV trouble. Gerald doesn't mind at all.

"I've always been happy to oblige," he says. "This has paid off as the more I give away, the more it comes back to me. It is still flowing to this day. God is good!"



Photo Courtesy of Brinkley RV



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Cheryl Barnes

Warranty Claims Processor
Jayco

47 years in the industry



Cheryl Barnes' role as warranty claims processor at Jayco includes communicating with dealerships and tracking industry trends to prioritize warranty issues, in addition to processing claims.

In her 47-year tenure in the RV industry, her colleagues say she has become a wealth of knowledge and a highly valued member of Jayco's claims team. She has gone to multiple dealerships to assist dealers in submitting their warranty claims.

Cheryl has been a firsthand witness to the growth of Jayco throughout the years. Her colleagues say her experience gives the company's claims team perspective to the way Jayco adapts to the industry and works to become a better company, including partnering with its dealer body. She is always willing to have new claims processors, pre-authorization reps or members of the VCB team shadow her through the day, her colleagues say.

Cheryl's kind and gentle approach in explaining claims processing makes new hires feel comfortable to ask questions. She will email members of the team when questions arise on claims in order to clarify and best serve Jayco's dealer body. In the company's all-staff meetings, Cheryl brings questions and concerns to the table in an effort to help make her team better.

Outside of the office, she is an avid gardener and enjoys spending time with her grandchildren.

Richard Mess

Sales Consultant
Wilkins RV

28 years in the industry



Richard Mess has spent his entire career at Wilkins RV, starting with the company when it comprised a single, small dealership in Hornell, New York. Today, the company has seven locations.

He is a skilled sales consultant who consistently follows proven sales processes to ensure an excellent customer buying experience, including prompt paperwork completion, making him an industry veteran worth honoring.

The company would like to see all sales professionals sell at least seven units per month, and actively seek, identify and obtain new prospects. Richard accomplishes these things by setting and monitoring progress toward agreed-upon sales goals. He also manages/prioritizes work to achieve progress toward yearly, monthly, weekly and daily sales goals against key performance indicators.

Richard successfully maintains and enhances ongoing customer relationships through timely follow-up communications with in-process, current and past customers. These connections help drive repeat business.

He is described as a team player who actively works to support other employees, departments and/or locations to give customers a seamless experience. He guides, inspires and acknowledges other salespeople and departments in meeting the needs of all stakeholders, his peers say.

Richard continually seeks to improve his skills through ongoing education, which keeps his sales skills, strategies and techniques sharp. Ongoing education and industry relationships, he says, help him always maintain a high level of product, market and industry knowledge.

Exceptional dedication and commitment to his role has enabled Richard to consistently exceed expectations and take on additional responsibilities. His peers attribute the team's and organization's success to his innovative thinking and problem-solving abilities. They say his strong work ethic and positive attitude have inspired them and have made him a valuable asset to Wilkins RV.

Richard brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his role, which enables him to navigate complex situations with ease and efficiency. He says he has had his fair share of challenges in his career but has always found ways to conquer them. He draws on his experience to make informed decisions quickly and confidently, often anticipating potential issues before they arise.

Richard has built extensive relationships over the years, and he leverages his connections to access resources, gather information and collaborate with key stakeholders, ultimately driving positive outcomes for Wilkins RV.

His peers say he actively shares his knowledge and expertise, offering guidance and encouragement to help team members grow. He mentors others through one-on-one meetings, giving feedback and career advice, and helping them set goals.









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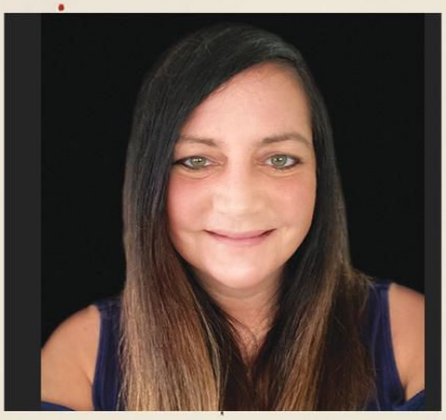
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Katie Lentine

VP Sales Administration
United States Warranty Corporation

29 years in the industry



Katie Lentine started working with United States Warranty Corporation (USWC) in February of 1995 as a bookkeeper. Soon, Katie's work at USWC — which provides comprehensive service contracts for recreational vehicles, motorhomes and more — became much more than a job. She fell in love with the RV industry. Now, 29 years later, she's still with the company and hasn't looked back.

Throughout her first 10 years at USWC, Katie worked in various roles at the company. She worked in underwriting and served as a claims adjuster. Once she landed in sales, she knew she'd found her niche. She currently serves as vice president of sales administration.

Because Katie has worn many different hats during her time at USWC, she has a wealth of knowledge to draw from when she's training new employees, building and maintaining relationships with key decision-makers, or working on client retention and loyalty. When the company launches new programs or growth initiatives, Katie takes a boots-on-the-ground approach so she can help guide others.

Despite being a busy single mom of three, Katie is always willing to fill in the gap when colleagues are on vacation or tied up with other projects. Her colleagues also know she's the one to go to for help with spreadsheets and slide decks, as well as net and retail rates and contract language.

Katie says that when the company faces obstacles, this just brings the team closer together.

"It really is a true family environment," she says of the company. "We push each other to do our best, guide each other when needed and support each other in challenging personal and professional times."

What keeps Katie in the RV industry? It's the people.

"We are in the relationship business," she says. "I have met many wonderful people throughout my years, forming true bonds with the entire community, from the customer, dealer and outside sales representatives. These people have bestowed upon me their knowledge and love for the outdoors that has fostered my love for this industry."

Mike O'Neil

Technical Trainer
Spartan RV Chassis

33 years in the industry



Towering at 6 feet, 8 inches tall, Mike "Big Mike" O'Neil of Spartan RV Chassis is hard to miss at an RV event. But Mike's height is just one of the many things that makes him stand out. His charisma, compassion and vast industry knowledge have all paved the way for a successful 33-year career in the RV business.

As a technical trainer at Spartan RV Chassis, Mike's job is to provide training for qualified service centers around the country and in Canada, training that's specific to the class A diesel pusher chassis that Spartan RV Chassis manufactures. He also provides RV owner training directly to customers, teaching them how to maintain their chassis and troubleshoot any issues that may arise.

Mike does it all. His training courses — which he created himself — include education on all of the subsystems on a class A diesel pusher chassis, from the air, cooling and electrical systems to the engine, suspensions, brakes and hydraulics — just to name a few.

Sometimes called the "Pied Piper" of the RV industry, Mike has an extensive following in the RV community. At RV rallies, it's not uncommon to find Mike on an owner's coach troubleshooting an issue or explaining how the subsystem works, going above and beyond the formal training sessions he provides at these events. In fact, he'll even help RVers who don't own a Spartan Chassis.

"He truly wears his heart on his sleeve," says Greg Rinehart, training and dealer operations manager at Spartan RV Chassis. "And at the end of the day, he truly wants the RV owner to understand and enjoy their class A motorhome for years to come."

Mike's wealth of knowledge of how each subsystem works comes from experience. He started at Spartan RV Chassis working on the production floor, building the chassis he now trains on. He has also assisted the company by going out and performing repairs at dealerships around the country.

When he looks back over his decades-long career, Mike says what he cherishes most are the relationships he's built along the way.

"Be it an owner or an RV technician, the RVer's dedication and camaraderie is unmatched," Mike says. "I feel very fortunate to have the lifelong friends I have made in my career. The memories I have will be cherished for the rest of my life."

RV PRO webinar



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Don Miller
Senior Consultant
IDS

Don Miller is a senior data consultant at Constellation Dealer Group. With more than 30 years of experience in the industry, Miller provides training, consulting and analytical services to dealerships. He specializes in data analysis and works extensively to educate dealerships on adopting a data-driven decision model. Miller created the IDS RECT report, an RVDA Chairman's Service Award-winning report. The report is used globally by dealerships to deliver better customer experiences.

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Royden Naugler

Shop Foreman
Bluenose RV Centre
35 years in the industry



Royden Naugler, shop foreman at Bluenose RV Centre in Pine Grove, Nova Scotia, oversees technicians and job assignments, teaches technicians about any subject that requires his expertise and conducts on-site repairs.

Royden goes above and beyond to help out his coworkers and clients, ensuring only the highest quality products and repairs leave the dealership. He is described by his colleagues as extremely knowledgeable and helpful, and they say Royden makes Bluenose RV a great place to work.

With Royden's 35 years of experience in the RV industry, he brings a wealth of knowledge to the business. "If he can't fix it, nobody can!" says his nominator, Jake Wile. "Royden also has an option for just about any situation if other parts are not available. He always makes it work!"

In his role as shop foreman, Royden also acts as a mentor. Whether he's teaching a new technician or advising someone more experienced, whatever the problem or situation, he always stays calm and offers a solution.

On the job, his coworkers say that Royden shows up every day with a smile — even though he is currently battling kidney disease and awaiting a kidney transplant. He remains positive and pushes on every day. "[He] is extremely tough," Jake says, "and an inspiration to everyone to keep going!"

Randy Murray

Director of Orientation
Pete's RV Center
25 years in the industry



As the director of orientation at Pete's RV Center, Randy Murray is responsible for the orientation departments of all three locations and ensuring that customers leave understanding how their new RV functions and what products can make their camping experience more enjoyable. Additionally, Randy does all the in-house technical training, imparting his decades of knowledge to team members to provide better customer service.

Randy is dedicated to his work, even assisting customers after hours to help repair issues, answer questions or troubleshoot problems that arise while they're out camping. He has recorded informational videos for the Pete's RV Center team as well as "tips and tricks" videos for social media.

"Randy is our go-to for all things technical," says his nominator, Casey King. "If he doesn't have the answer, he has a network of industry professionals at his fingertips that he has built close relationships with."

Prior to joining the RV industry, Randy was an electrician and a welder fabricator. As an electrician, he quickly rose through the ranks, transitioning from residential and commercial installations to crafting custom haulers at Pete's RV. With experience spanning technician roles to sales and now management in fixed operations, colleagues admire Randy's problem-solving prowess and his ability to tackle any challenge. He has also collaborated with leading RV manufacturers to enhance product quality and user-friendliness.

Randy has hosted multiple seminars during show seasons and does weekly training with sales and service in seven states, so it's no surprise that he's passionate about mentoring and sharing his knowledge with other people.

"I want my legacy to be about training employees and customers alike," Randy says, reflecting on his time in the RV industry. "I would like to be remembered as the guy that explained things simply so anyone could understand [and] also as the guy that would help anybody in need.

"I work for and with some of the most amazing people I know," Randy says, "and I truly love what I do."

Family is important to Randy as well. "[He] is an incredible father to his daughter," Casey says. "They take numerous father-daughter trips each year, and you can tell just how proud he is of her when he talks about her."

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RVWA

RV WOMEN'S ALLIANCE



Public Speaking: Recording Available At WWW.RVWA.ORG

Everyone has a story, and as a communicator, Stacey Harris loves helping companies craft their brand stories. She excels in various marketing and public relations skills including copywriting, social media marketing, digital advertising, omnichannel campaign development, media training, market research, branding and positioning, and leadership development.



August 8th: Live Workshop "Negotiating for Women"

RV Hall of Fame - 8:45-11:15am

John Tinghitella is coming back for a more in-depth live workshop on negotiating for women. Using his book as your guide, you will learn:

- Why We Negotiate
- Martini Glass Thinking
- The Power You Hold In A Room
- The Power of Preparation & Tactics

July 17th: Navigating Change

Nicole is a certified behavior consultant with a depth of experience in organizational leadership. She is an unparalleled communicator who can make even the most extreme introvert feel comfortable! With a naturally curious and empathetic style, Nicole can quickly determine where a person is and curate a solution for them.

August 22nd: Making Difficult Conversations Easier

Dustin has led breakout sessions, keynotes, and multi-day conferences across the U.S. and Canada, covering topics including the customer experience, leadership, team development, and personal development. His clients include multi-billion dollar companies like Forest River, Grand Design, and Home Hardware Stores LTD.



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Angie Campbell

Warranty Manager
Lerch RV
27 years in the industry



Angie Campbell's journey with Lerch RV began as parts manager and evolved into trusted leadership in warranty management.

Angie ensures customers receive exceptional support throughout their ownership experience. With her extensive knowledge of RV parts and systems, she's the dealership's "secret weapon" regarding warranty support for its customers and has battled with OEMs as Lerch customers' advocate for their warranty concerns. Her colleagues consider her the "best warranty manager in the RV industry and an asset to Lerch RV."

With over 27 years of experience in RV parts, accessories and warranty, Angie can navigate almost any customer problem and has outlasted many warranty reps at the manufacturer level. Over time, she's become a trusted source of information. Her advocacy for Lerch' customers is a driving factor in ensuring OEMs are doing the right thing at the warranty level.

Angie brings passion, a great sense of humor and a contagious work ethic to her fellow employees. Because of her years of experience, she understands RV systems inside and out and has passed her knowledge and understanding of complexities within the warranty process to her assistant, who she is a great mentor to.

Her passion for work also extends to her family. She is always the primary caregiver to many family members, often taking on their burdens as her own. Angie has a heart of gold that shines through in her personal and professional life, her colleagues say.

Colby Cannon

Managing Partner
Vogt RV World
26 years in the industry



Colby Cannon started his tenure at Vogt RV World in 1998 as a service department trainee. Today he is the managing partner. He's worn many hats at the company, including service manager, sales manager and general manager. No matter the role, Colby's work ethic has always set him apart.

Colby has maintained a grinding schedule at multiple Vogt RV dealerships in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. He works directly with the president of the company helping to coordinate and run fixed operations, sales, marketing and administration meetings. Plus, he often attends different meetings and events to help Vogt RV World stay ahead of the market. He's also trained dozens of people within his organization.

Despite his busy schedule, Colby has held a Monday morning Bible study for years for any Vogt employees and other industry representatives who wish to attend. Through these meetings he's become an unofficial mentor to people who need guidance or just a listening ear.

Community service is a top priority for Colby, too. He's organized efforts to help veterans and military families, as well as Christmastime charity drives for Samaritan's Purse.

Leaders at Vogt RV World consider Colby's contributions invaluable, so when Colby left the company in 2015 to start his own venture, they were determined to get him back. He ran a successful business for a few years, but eventually sold it and returned to Vogt. In the last five years he's helped Vogt grow from three to five stores.

"His job experience allows us to strengthen any department as needed with his expertise and involvement," Aaron Vogt, president of Vogt RV World, says of Colby.

"He is simply a person that works very hard; certainly can demand a job well done, but is willing to insert himself in time and effort to help you succeed," Aaron says. "His is a shining light to this world!"

When asked what he'll remember most about his time in the RV industry, Colby says, "The biggest joy has come from people and relationships, from friendships forged with manufacturers, colleagues, and most importantly, our customers."

Colby doesn't take lightly the role he gets to play in the lives of others.

"We are in a unique position to help people fulfill their dreams, while bringing families and friends together to explore this beautiful country," he says. "At the end of the day, we get to sell fun, and for that I will always be grateful to this wonderful thing we call the RV industry."



Longtime Employees Spotlight

Blue Ox of Pender, Nebraska, has seven employees who have worked with the company for 30 years or more. Here are those longtime company veterans:

Doug Prokop — *Ag Account Development* — 39 years
Les Roeber — *Machine Shop Manager* — 38 years
Billie Rager — *Machine Programmer* — 37 years
Tony Henschke — *Maintenance Technician* — 37 years
Kevin Griffin — *Welding Technician* — 33 years
Cory Meyer — *Shipping and Receiving* — 31 years
Rhonda Hermelbracht —*Manufacturing Planner* — 30 years

3 INDUSTRY VETERANS OFFER PERSPECTIVE ON THEIR CAREERS

These dedicated employees at three different brands under Patrick Industries have learned that people make the difference.

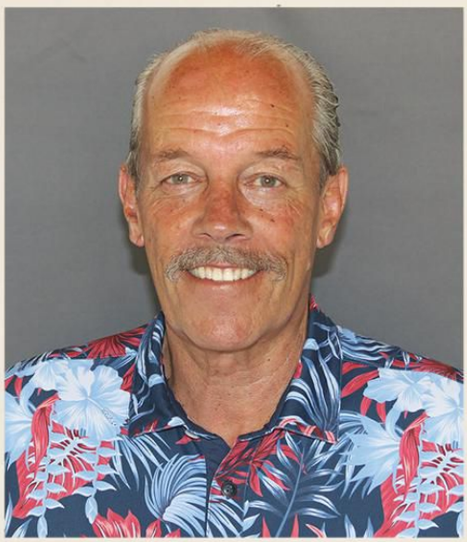
BY JENNIFER KING



Brenda Templeton
Customer Service Rep.
Adorn



Pete Baker
Business Unit Director
North American Moulding



LJ Lawton
Product Manager
Alpha Systems

While speaking with Brenda Templeton, Pete Baker and LJ Lawton, it was clear these Patrick Industries employees had one thing in common despite taking different roads in the RV industry: their relationships with people have been the highlights of their careers.

Here is RV PRO's conversation with three industry stalwarts at a company that prides itself on having hundreds of employees who have stayed with their brands for decades.

RV PRO: Tell me how long you've worked at Patrick, and what was your role when you started out and what do you do now?

Brenda: I've been here a little over 28 years now. I started in accounting in 1995. I did accounts receivable and accounts payable. And then we started to grow and by 2000, I moved into order entry. By 2003 I landed in customer service, and it's been the best fit for me. I like the interaction with the customers. I like building relationships with people, and I

really like to solve problems [and] try to help where I can.

Pete: I started at North American Moulding (NAM) in 2004 and stayed on the team when Patrick bought NAM nine years ago. When I started, we had 17 employees and now there are 200-plus now. [Prior] I worked in management for newspapers, Grand Rapids and some other places.

LJ: I've always been in sales, always had account responsibility ... And so far here in '24, I've become our company's product manager. I don't have any accounts anymore. My job description is basically help the guys. So, whether it's sales opportunities, sales problems, I get involved in all those things and just support the sales team.

I was kind of raised to do this job. My father was an industrial chemical salesman, and all lessons were always about how to treat people. So, I had a lot of that my whole life. I've always been in sales; I love sales.

RV PRO: What do you think you've gained since coming into Patrick?

Pete: When Patrick bought us, one of the reasons they bought us [is] we had a brand and the brand was strong. After Patrick bought us, I thought they'd probably just bring some corporate people in. And I remember [them] saying, no, we want you to run it and we want to keep it like it is and we want to continue to grow. So, it's been a blessing in many ways because we've gotten a lot of capital investments. We have a lot of automation here, and that's cool they've allowed us to do those things When people see you growing and when people see capital investments coming in and we just put in a sixth laminator — we're starting it up next week — those things are happening, and people see that, and they see that their future feels stronger.

LJ: From working all those years, basically 33 years, for the Smiths at Alpha Systems — they really cared about their employees. At the time of the sale to Patrick, I can't count how many people had worked there for over 20 years, me being one of them as well ... [We were] treated right — people like to go to work at places like that. And then since Patrick has purchased us, meeting a lot of the key people in the company and going to certain programs and seminars that they've had, I have the same feeling that I had working for a small, family-owned company that grew into a giant company. I feel I'm important. I feel people care about me and my family's well-being, and I feel very fortunate.

COMPANY VALUES

Balance — "We work to build a healthy work environment that encourages excellence, happiness and peace in both our work and our home life."
Excellence — "We strive to meet the highest possible standards of achievement in our work and relationships."
Trust — "We do what we say we will do every time — and communicate with all stakeholders if a commitment evolves."
Teamwork — "We challenge, encourage, equip, empower and inspire the individuals we work with."
Empowerment — "We give our team members the information, tools and trust they need to grow as leaders and achieve results."
Respect — "We treat our teammates and partners with the utmost honor and dignity."

Source: patrickind.com

RV PRO: What have been some of the best parts of your experience at this company?

Brenda: I think it really is a team. It feels like one big family. And none of us could really succeed and satisfy a customer without all the rest of us ... We all back each other up all the time. If I'm needed somewhere else, I go somewhere else. And by the same token, all my teammates do exactly the same.

RV PRO: How do you feel about the training or the personal and career development opportunities you've been given?

Brenda: When we first came to Patrick, there's the customer first training and that gets refreshed from time to time. Then we have leadership training ... that happens periodically. That's always really helpful and really insightful. And most important, probably, is just the mentors that we've had along the way. People that we can always go to and figure out what the best path for us is.

Pete: I've had lots of training over the years because I've been a manager since I was 27. So, it's one of those deals where when I came into Patrick, they had certain things they wanted to do certain ways — every company is a little different. And so, it was teaching me about how they viewed things.

Patrick Industries by the Numbers

1959: The year Patrick, a component solutions provider of products and building materials for RV, marine, powersports and manufactured housing markets, was founded in Elkhart, Indiana.

85-plus brands

250-plus manufacturing and distribution facilities in 23 states

10,000 team members

GROWING AT PATRICK INDUSTRIES

According to the Patrick Industries' website, the company prides itself on being "committed to providing continued growth opportunities for those who excel in their position." This includes professional development opportunities, "whether this is through building capabilities, taking on stretch roles or participating in the tuition reimbursement program." Future team members are cultivated at Patrick through the IMPACT leadership development program for recent college graduates. The one-year program in Elkhart allows college graduates to experience different facets of Patrick, gain exposure to different business units and learn through a hands-on assignment, partnering with a mentor, and receiving training "designed to prepare you to succeed while delivering results with day-to-day responsibilities." *For more information, visit patrickind.com/careers.*

My background with people has been lots of training over the years, including Patrick. And it's all been good — the interaction with a lot of the people here that have been with Patrick since we came. As I said, they want us to continue to be our brand and run it. They've been very supportive of any time I've called or needed anything.

RV PRO: What do you think it is about the culture at Patrick that makes it different?

Brenda: I think that all our leaders here let us know pretty much every day how much they appreciate us and what a difference we make. That goes a long way [toward] making you want to stay somewhere if you really feel like you're appreciated and needed. I know that at any time, I could call on one of our leaders, one of our officers, or whatever to get advice or to talk about something.

Pete: At Patrick, we value people. Even the way we handle complaints, we talk about our culture and about our brand ... and bottom line, we are going to take care of people. I go out and talk to people, send them emails, follow up. We just don't leave anything hanging. We always try to resolve any issues and get back to the customer with what we did. The concept of quality and service is critically important.

LJ: If you're experienced, [and you] know what you're doing, [they] just let you do your job. There's no micromanaging because we're part of this big company now.

RV PRO: When you look back over your years in the RV industry, what will you remember most?

Pete: If somebody was asking you when you retire, what will you remember? It'll be the people. Some of them I hired at Elkhart when I started and they're still here. They know me well enough to give me a hard time or something when I go through the plant. That's cool ... The relationships have been great.

LJ: I would say after all these years, and I mean this sincerely, the thing I never saw coming when I was a younger man was how some of these guys, customers — one in particular — [would become] one of my best friends. Through doing business, you get to know these people and you really like some of them. I have 30-year relationships with some of these guys ... and that's probably been the most gratifying thing for me — the people I've [met] and the relationships that I've made over the years. I'll probably look back on that as being the most gratifying thing.

> **"That's been the most gratifying thing for me — the people I've met and the relationships."**
>
> **LJ Lawton**

And I'll say, watching the Smiths grow Alpha Systems as they did and how they treat it was really impressive. When I came on, there were six people working at Alpha when I joined the team in 1989. I think now it might be [up] to 300 or something.

Brenda: I feel like Patrick has always encouraged me to do what I need to do to take care of my family. And that means if I need to take off when I had small children to take them to an appointment or a doctor or go to their school for some particular event, they said go, that's important. Currently, my mom is elderly and I have to take off sometimes to take her to appointments, and it's the same. They're like, do what you need to do to take care of your family because that's important and balance is important.

Besides that, I'm going to mostly remember the people here because there's a lot of people who've been here almost as long as I have. And coworkers are friends to celebrate life's good moments [with] and to lean on in the hard times ... the people are the most important. And being here with people that you care about and people that care about me, that's what makes it all worthwhile. RVP



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A new addition to Trinseo's material solutions portfolio resulting from the acquisition of Aristech Surfaces, INDURO™ is a highly engineered acrylic structural material offering a best-in-class, superior strength solution for a range of applications within the recreational vehicle and mobility markets. Providing superior protection from UV damage and chalking, INDURO™ offers five times greater surface finish layer qualities over TPO and gel coat. It also holds greater color retention and gloss level surface finish durability. For more information, visit aristechsurfaces.com

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A NEW LIFESTYLE AT A RIVERSIDE CAMPGROUND

U.S. Air Force veteran James Cook and his wife, Sheila, found another career running Gasconade Hills Resort in Missouri.

BY DARIAN ARMER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GASCONADE HILLS RESORT.



Some of the resort's premium RV sites provide a view of the Gasconade River.

Sheila Cook and her husband, James, purchased Gasconade Hills Resort in Richland, Missouri, in 2021.

"My husband served in the U.S. Air Force for more than 20 years before he retired. We lived in California, and I worked in the public sector in health care. When he retired, he also worked in health care. We both did that for about 10 years or so," Sheila says. "After COVID, we decided to sell everything and buy a campground. So, that's what we did. We moved to Missouri in 2021."

The funny thing is, Sheila had a list, and Missouri wasn't on it.

"We did have a list. I'm very analytical. I had all the data points. Missouri wasn't on the list because of weather factors [and] family proximity, and we were looking for a Southwest location instead of Midwest," she says. "I stumbled across this one and fell in love with the pictures and the history. We thought we'd go out and look at it. We visited in October 2020 and fell in love with it. We put an offer in, and now we live here year-round on the property."

The first year, Sheila and James worked to get the infrastructure built back up. Although she says it was a fully functioning and thriving business, there was a lot of wear and tear.

"We redid the well, emptied and cleaned the septic and put up a Wi-Fi tower," she says. "The second year, we started to update the cabins, doubled our RV sites and added glamping tents. Then we purchased more boats and fishing kayaks that are pretty popular. The third year, we continued to add those amenities and improvements."

Sheila says they've increased their efforts in branding and marketing and are continuing to work to boost service. Electrical improvements and cabin improvements are ongoing.

The couple experienced a setback on April 1 this year when the campground was hit with a very severe storm.

"We lost one of our historic cabins and another has been severely damaged. It took out all the new power lines and the new RV lines," she says. "It accelerated our timeline for doing the rewiring. We lost about 60 trees. Because of the storm, that's been our big focus since April."

The campground has been open, and Sheila says they haven't lost any business over the storm damage. While setbacks like this may have closed other



Dogs are welcome at the campground.





Gasconade Hills Resort owners Sheila and James Cook.

campgrounds for repairs, Sheila says James' background in the military as a flight engineer has allowed them to overcome challenges.

"He has lots of tactical background that he brings to the campground. From the military, he's used to being resourceful, having ingenuity and working in a fast-paced environment. The fact that he can fix anything and everything has proved critical to us. He's a jack-of-all-trades," she says.

The couple was featured in an article by The Dyrt, an app for camping information and booking, which reported that 14.8% of campers are veterans or active military. In addition, another survey by the company found that 13.4% of property owners in the camping industry across the United States had served or currently serve in the military.



Float trips on the Gasconade River are another major part of the resort's business; the most popular are the four- and six-mile trips.

The Resort

Located on the Gasconade River in the Ozark Mountains in Missouri, Gasconade Hills Resort features cabins, camper rentals, RV rentals, glamping, tent camping and RV sites for accomodations.

Activities include:

- Float trips on the river
- Pool
- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Badmitton
- Horseshoes
- Playgrounds

And in addition to pet-friendly locations, there are grills and firepits, picnic areas, fishing and modern conveniences like a new Wi-Fi tower, new EV charging stations and an on-site convenience store.

As the campground's website says, the site is a great location for "we-time."

For more information about Gasconade Hills Resort, visit gasconadehills.com.

Even while working to repair damage from the storm, the couple is still looking forward to continuing to improve amenities.

"We plan to add some additional cabins and glamping tents. We're about maxed out as to what we can add for lodging," she says. "As for amenity additions, we plan to update the pool and playground equipment. We bought goats and opened a petting zoo park, and we want to add to that. We bought some new outdoor games and want to add more games like giant checkers."

The campground already has amenities such as a convenience store and visitor information center, EV charging stations and an activity pavilion with basketball, volleyball, badminton and horseshoes: The campground is also dog friendly with a walk, run and waste stations.

Another major part of the campground's business is float trips on the Gasconade River. The resort has access to the river and the campground offers various lengths for its float trips. Sheila says their most popular float trips are four and six miles long. During the float trip, guests can stop to eat, play and fish. There are even overnight floats from 10 to 20 miles long.

Guests can rent canoes with two or three seats, various kayaks, paddleboards, rafts for up to eight people and a shuttle for personal boats or tubes. There are cushions, paddles and life vests available for rental as well.

"We have a low, slow river that's family-friendly and great for newer floaters. It's not a party river. We try to stay true to that. We have great neighbors and want to be great neighbors to them as well," Sheila says.

That goes hand in hand with the Cooks' philosophy on customer service.

"Our philosophy for customer service is creating lasting and loving memories for families and friends that come here to enjoy the campground," Sheila says. "We're honored to be a part of that, and the amount of trust people put in us to do that." RVP



The Cooks' granddaughter Madison enjoys the fun that the family-friendly campground offers, including grills, firepits and picnic tables.

"We visited in October 2020 and fell in love with [Gasconade]. We put an offer in, and now we live here year-round on the property."



Sheila and James Cook

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rv-pro.com/webinars

MADE IN USA

Manufacturing products close to home offers big benefits.



FRESH WATER & HOLDING TANKS

Ameri-Kart, Bristol, Indiana, offers its RV Fresh Water and Holding Tanks. Ameri-Kart and Elkhart Plastics, both Myers Industries companies, are now expanding their product offerings into the RV aftermarket. The expansion is a natural fit for both brands as they have served the RV OEM segment for over 35 years. Keller Marine and RV is the first distributor to participate in the program. Ameri-Kart and Elkhart Plastics plan to expand their offerings through additional distributors to prioritize the RV user experience.

myersengineeredsolutions.com/ameri-kart



WATER SERVICE PANEL

Anderson Brass Co., Hartsville, South Carolina, presents its MANRV102 RV Water Service Panel, an essential utility for versatile water management in your RV. Equipped with a four-function brass valve, it allows for easy switching between city water supply, dry camping, tank filling and sanitizing or winterizing your system. Additionally, a three-function water heater bypass valve facilitates normal operation, maintenance bypass and tank sanitization. This panel simplifies water handling while ensuring durability and reliability.

andersonbrass.com



HYDRONIC HEATING SYSTEM

Aqua-Hot, an Airxcel brand, Frederick, Colorado, offers its 125 Hydronic Heating System, a thermal fluid heat and hot water on-demand system built by Aqua-Hot in Frederick, Colorado. Designed for Class B vehicles, the 125 is a compact, all-in-one unit that produces moist, even interior heat and continuous hot water at 110 F to 120 F. Bringing high-end climate control to camper vans and overland vehicles, the 125 series has gasoline and diesel models with 110 electrical elements in multiple configurations for installation ease and flexibility. Compatible in-floor heating kit available.

aquahot.com

TIRE BLOWOUT PROTECTION

Armis RV Guardian, Seguin, Texas, presents its Armis RV Guardian, a patent-pending axle-mounted tire shrapnel containment shield system designed to protect RVs from the damage tire blowouts can cause. All-steel construction delivers protection with proven durability. Armis will not void trailer warranties with its bolt-on system and comes with a limited lifetime warranty. The Armis RV Guardian protects your adventures and keeps you safe on the road.

armisrvguardian.com



WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION HITCH



B&W Trailer Hitches, Humboldt, Kansas, offers its Continuum Weight Distribution Hitch, which ensures effortless setup and precise control, providing immediate and continuous sway prevention from the moment you hitch up. Simply adjust the head unit with two pins, snap the dual composite spring bars in place and use the hydraulic system to fine-tune the pressure with just the pump of a handle. Accommodates trailers up to 16,000 pounds with tongue weights ranging from 600 to 1,600 pounds.

bwtrailerhitches.com



RV ROOF CLEANER & PROTECTANT

Bio-Kleen Products, Kalamazoo, Michigan, presents its RV Roof Cleaner & Protectant, which is made in the USA. This two-in-one product cleans and protects many types of rubber RV roofs, including EPDM, PVC and TPO. It easily removes dirt, debris, tree sap and more, performing in the harshest, dustiest environments. It contains SPF 70 UV protection to maximize the look and life span of your RV roof, and does not utilize any petroleum solvents, harsh abrasives or citrus ingredients that can cause premature roof degradation.

biokleen.com



FIFTH WHEEL HITCH

Blue Ox, Pender, Nebraska, offers its BXR2100 fifth wheel hitch, featuring a true kingpin connection. No adapters are required. A funnel-shaped hitch head helps guide the kingpin into place, significantly reducing the rate of false hookups and trailer drops with 360-degree nesting around the kingpin. The hitch head is dual articulating: front, back, side to side. The BXR2100 connects to a 2-5/16-inch gooseneck with a 21,000 gross towing capacity and 5000-pound vertical load limit. The BXR2410 fits standard bed rails with a 24,000 gross towing capacity and 6000-pound vertical load limit.

blueox.com



RV CLEANER

Valterra Products, Mission Hills, California, presents its Wash & Wax. This rich formula cleans RVs and other vehicles deep down, leaving a streak-free, long-lasting luster in a single step. Simply add 2 ounces to a gallon of water and watch the RV transform. Customers will also get a free RV-sized sponge to complete their washing kit. Safe for all finishes. Available in 1-quart and half gallon sizes.

valterra.com



RV/MARINE CLEANING SOLUTIONS



Century Chemical Corp., Elkhart, Indiana, offers its Travel Jon, Heat Transfer Fluid and Supreme Green. Century's products are manufactured in the USA and have been providing travel enthusiasts with products they need on land, air and water, as well as during winter storage. Travel Jon is a trusted RV holding tank treatment while Century Heat Transfer Fluid is used in RV floor heating, solar units and more. The enzyme-based Supreme Green family of products is formulated to fight off-grid aromas, leaving minimal impact on the environment.

centurychemical.com

RV CHAIR

Bradd and Hall, Elkhart, Indiana, introduces its 702 Benson RV Captains Chair, the newest model. The Benson RV Captains Chair is built in Elkhart, includes adjustable arms and skirt, and has power lumbar and six-way power, pedestal and footrest as available options. The chair is covered in vinyl or Ultraleather. More models and colors are available online. Bradd and Hall has been serving the RV industry since 1982.

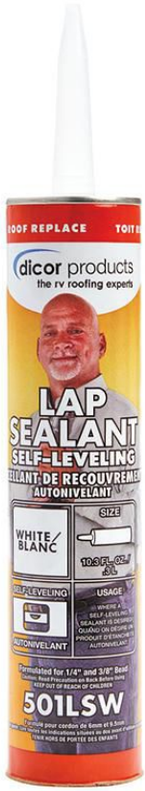
braddandhall.com



RESTORATION TREATMENT

D3 RENEW PROTECT, Asheville, North Carolina, presents its BLAK, GLOZ and SATN. D3 RENEW PROTECT supplies essential feeder elements that restore the original composition of the substrate. D3 RENEW PROTECT dry-seal ozone and UV block with thermal stability via silica quartz, zinc and titanium oxides and nano oxides. This technology slows blooming and off-gassing and enhances the retention of protective elements. BLAK contains a high level of carbon black and is ideal for the restoration of faded black surfaces. SATN has UV radiative transfer abilities, which gives a moderate to low shine. The GLOZ provides a high direct refractive index and high shine. The products can also be layered for even greater protective abilities and intense finish. This can be done with BLAK serving as a base coat to be followed with one treatment of GLOZ or SATN.

renewprotect.com



SELF-LEVELING LAP SEALANT

Dicor Products, an Airxcel brand, Elkhart, Indiana, offers its 501LSW Self-Leveling Lap Sealant, which creates a secure, secondary seal along RV roof edges, air vents, vent pipes and screw heads. HAPS-free and made in the USA. 501LSW Self-Leveling Lap Sealant is compatible with EPDM, TPO and PVC membranes. Adheres firmly to aluminum, mortar, wood, vinyl, galvanized metal and fiberglass. Available in white, black, gray, dove, tan and ivory. UV stabilized to prevent deterioration and discoloration, it will not stain or discolor roofing material.

dicorproducts.com

LIQUID BUTYL RUBBER

EPDM Roof Coatings, Shelton, Connecticut, offers its Liquid Butyl Rubber. EPDM's Liquid Butyl Rubber has over 30 years of history and is made here in the USA. Ideal for roofs, it never needs a primer and is a one-coat application.

epdmcoatings.com





FIFTH WHEEL PIN BOX REPLACEMENT

GEN-Y Hitch, Nappanee, Indiana, presents its EXECUTIVE Fifth Wheel Pin Box Replacement, which provides RVers control, safety and a smoother ride. The built-in TORSION-FLEX technology shock absorption reduces 90% of inertia between truck and trailer, helping to minimize chucking and jerking, and providing safety for the customer and cargo from harsh bumps. GEN-Y's Fifth Wheel to Gooseneck model frees up space in your truck bed. The auto-latching SnapLatch coupler snaps into place and creates a completely secure connection.

genyhitch.com



ADHESIVE INTERIOR TREATMENT

Genesis Products, Goshen, Indiana, offers its REVIVE, a new way to upgrade an RV. RVers can reface, replace and refresh RV wallboards, cabinets and backsplash with the Revive Collection by Genesis. Simply peel and stick to transform the interior. The REVIVE Collection is made with RV-grade adhesive specifically designed to stand up to changes in temperature, moisture and movement on the road. Kits come in 2-foot by 100-foot and 2-foot by 50-foot rolls.

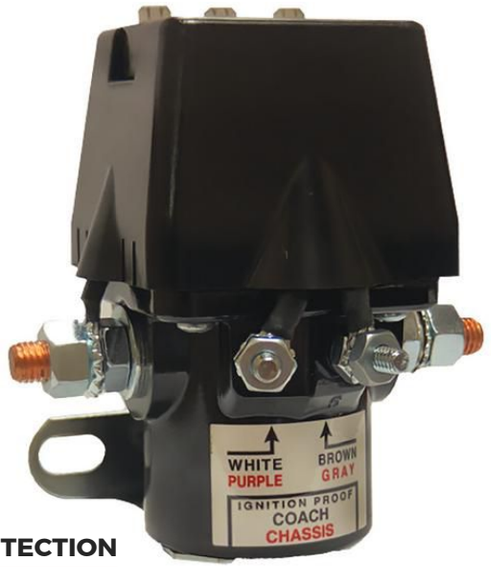
genesisproductsinc.com



VOLTAGE BOOSTERS

Hughes Autoformers, Anaheim, California, offers its Hughes Autoformers Voltage Booster 30A and 50A versions. The patented Hughes Autoformers RV voltage booster boosts dangerously low voltage that can damage an RV, an issue that many RVers will face. While surges or spikes happen once in a while, for RVers camping for a season, getting hit with low voltage is almost guaranteed. The solution — the Hughes Autoformers Voltage Booster, which also has built in surge/spike protection.

hughesautoformers.com



BATTERY PROTECTION

Intellitec Products, DeLand, Florida, presents its Battery Guard 1000. The Battery Guard 1000 (BG1K) is an intelligent low-voltage battery disconnect. The BG1K senses when the voltage level of the battery drops to a specified voltage threshold, disconnecting the battery from the load, keeping the vehicle operable, as well as preventing potential damage to the battery. The BG1K automatically reconnects the battery when the voltage level is safe. The BG1K system can be manually controlled as well using an LED push-button switch.

intellitec.com





GUTTER SPOUTS

JR Products, Clarence Center, New York, presents its Gutter Spouts, which are made in the USA. Several different styles are available to help keep the water marks off your RV. They're also offered in regular length and extended length, and options of flexible or rigid. All options come in either polar white or black.

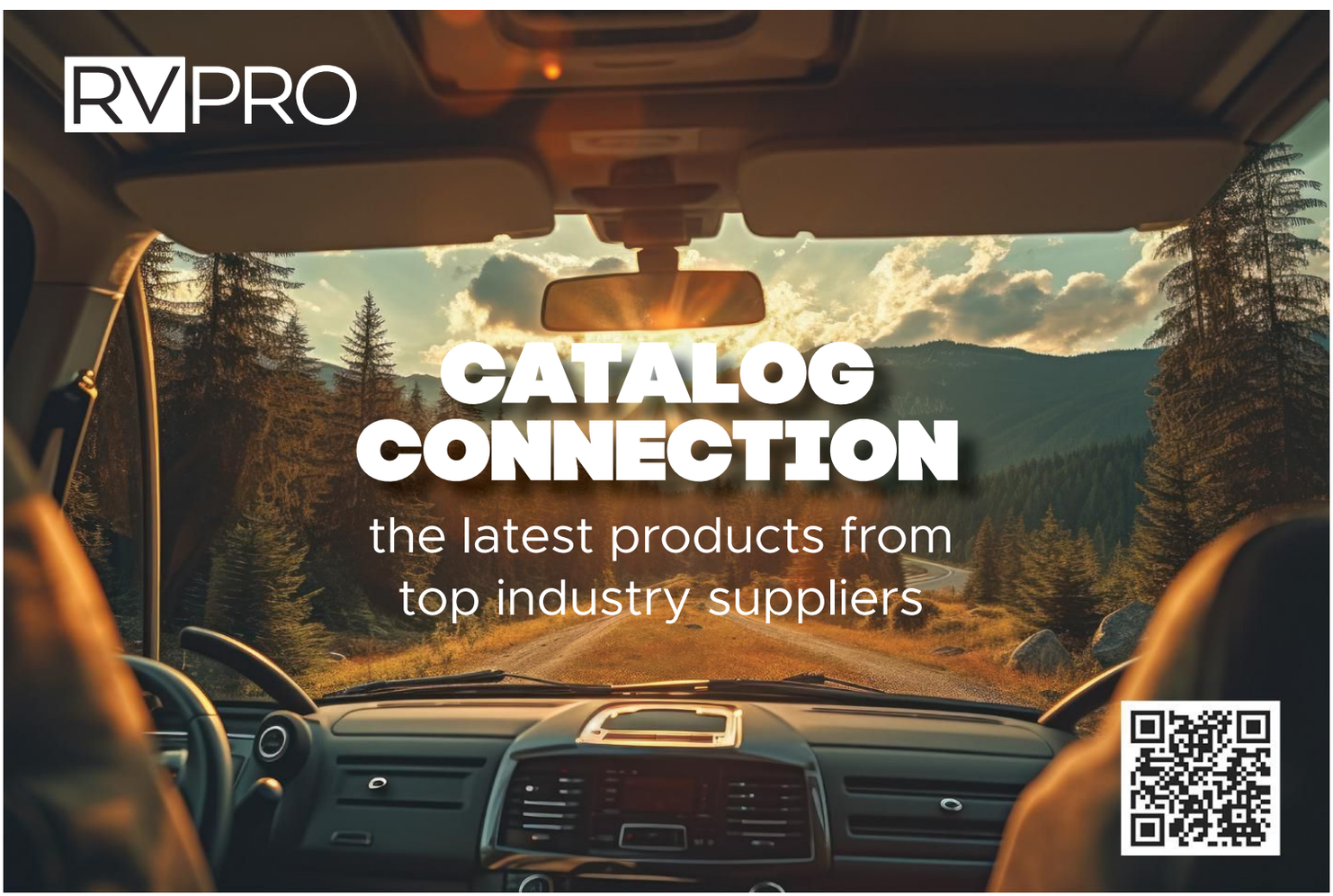
jrproducts.net



DOUBLE-SIDED HIGH BOND ACRYLIC TAPE

LAMATEK, West Deptford, New Jersey, offers its Double Sided High Bond Acrylic Tape, a high bond acrylic adhesive tape that permanently and conveniently bonds to metal, wood and other RV component materials for bonding parts without mechanical fasteners like screws, rivets, spot welds and nails. High bond tape reduces the need for additional tools and cleanup. Available in clear, gray, black or white, with varying adhesive strengths and supplied in rolls, jumbo spools or custom die-cut pieces for aftermarket assembly and more.

lamatek.com





ROLLER SHADES

MCD Innovations, an Airxcel brand, McKinney, Texas, presents its American Duo Roller Shades. American Duo Day-Night Roller Shades made by MCD Innovations provide heat and UV reduction, daytime and nighttime privacy, and are available in hand-operated or powered models. The treatment's day shade offers excellent outward visibility with UV protection; the night shade was designed for privacy with 100% blackout material. MCD roller shades are custom-made to fit your RV's aesthetics and design with professional, in-house installation offered at the MCD Texas facilities.

mcdinnovations.com

TRAILER AXLES

Lippert, Elkhart, Indiana, offers its Trailer Axles, which boast the following standard features: robotic welds, waterproof connectors on wiring, black powder coating on RV and utility trailer axles and galvanized finish on marine axles. Lippert's manufacturing equipment and experienced axle professionals ensure that every component meets your custom specifications and their high standards through rigorous testing. Lippert's axle assemblies and components are traceable down to the production run and original lot number, and are assembled in the USA.

lippert.com



NIGHTHAWK

The World's First Illuminated Tow Bar

A truly non-binding tow bar made from beautifully-styled aluminum and featuring LED lights along each arm that illuminate with the RV's lights for increased safety.

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- Non-binding Freedom Latch — easiest tow bar in the industry to use and disconnect.
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- Aluminum outer arms, solid stainless steel inner arms and baked-on powder-coat finish shield against corrosion.
- Enclosed channel for power cords and safety cables keeps things tidy, secure and protected.
- Safety cables and power cord — Nighthawk comes with both and each are coiled to accommodate deep drop hitches and extension hitches
- Nylatron bushings — eliminate metal-on-metal friction for less wear and long life.
- Extruded design — incorporates channels to route safety cables and power cord.



PROPANE GAS & CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM

MTI Industries, Destin, Florida, presents its Safe T Alert Model 85-741-TR, its newest combination propane/LP and carbon monoxide alarm. This slim line model is accompanied with a Trim Ring provided to cover previous installation cutouts. Available in white (-WT) and black (-BL).

STADealer.com



RAIN PROTECTION

Maxxair, an Airxcel brand, Wichita, Kansas, offers its Fanmate for superior rain protection over multispeed fans. Its high air flow design results in maximum ventilation with less than 5% airflow restriction. Fanmate allows RVers to use their fans or vents in inclement weather or while RV is in motion. EZClip hardware makes for easy, tool-free installation fitting over the molded, waterproof mounting tabs on a Maxxfan Standard (hardware with clips included for mounting on other fan types). Available in black, smoke and white.

maxxair.com





AIR CONDITIONING SOFT STARTER

Micro-Air, Allentown, New Jersey, offers its EasyStart Breeze Soft Starter, which Micro-Air manufactures and distributes to dealers and consumers. Adding the EasyStart Breeze Soft Starter to an RV AC enhances the boondocking experience while reducing startup current by 65% to 75% and preventing loud AC startup noises in the night. Additionally, Micro-Air offers a free warranty on the compressor motor upon installation of its soft starter. Micro-Air's products are designed, engineered and manufactured in New Jersey.

microair.net

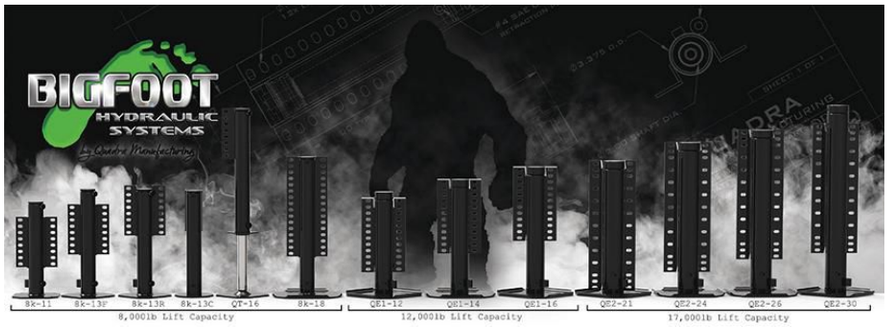


AUTOMATIC FIRE PROTECTION DEVICE

Proteng Distribution, Wellington, Florida, presents its THIA Automatic Fire Detection & Suppression. THIA automatic fire protection devices detect, prevent, suppress or extinguish fires at stages even prior to ignition. It does so in milliseconds with a custom-installed heat-activated delivery system. THIA uses clean agent FM-200, and is rated for use on Class A, B and C type fires — it is nontoxic and noncorrosive. They require no maintenance and can function for more than a decade. Developed for a Le Mans prototype race team and made in the USA.

proteng.com





HYDRAULIC LEVELING SYSTEMS

Quadra Mfg., White Pigeon, Michigan, presents its Hydraulic Leveling Systems. Hydraulic landing gear and leveling systems are made for a variety of industries, from the RV world to commercial and heavy industrial equipment applications. Quadra's cylinders are machined, assembled and tested at its facility in White Pigeon. All other main components come from the Midwest region of the U.S.

bigfootleveler.com



FIFTH WHEEL HITCH

PullRite, Mishawaka, Indiana, offers its OEX Series hitches, which are some of the easiest hitches to install. Each model is installed and removed by using OEX Mounting Posts, which are removable and require no tools to operate. OEX also offers plenty of cab-to-trailer clearance. The interchangeable Super 5th coupler utilizes a fully automatic latch system available and provides 4 inches of offset. The OEX Super 5th is the lightest 25K hitch on the market and is SAE J2638 rated.

pullrite.com

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RV-CO Manufacturing, Emory, Texas, presents its Portable Deck and Steps, which are constructed from strong lightweight aluminum with nonslip surfaces that can be set up quickly and compact for easy storage. Steps are offered in 5- and 7-inch rises. Adjustable legs easily allow for changes in height and terrain. Decks are available as low as 18 inches and as high as 40 inches, and decks can be joined together to create supersized decks. Getting in and out of your RV could not be easier or more comfortable.

rv-co.com

WOUNDED WARRIOR LIMITED EDITION PRODUCTS

Southwire, Carrollton, Georgia, offers its Wounded Warrior Limited Edition Products, demonstrating its passion for supporting veterans, local communities and the markets they serve. Through this partnership with WWP, Southwire is able to directly support programs and services that give veterans access to independence, mental and physical health, career counseling, peer support and family support. A variety of Wounded Warrior Project Limited Edition Products are available, including pliers made from American forged steel.

southwire.com/wounded-warrior-products

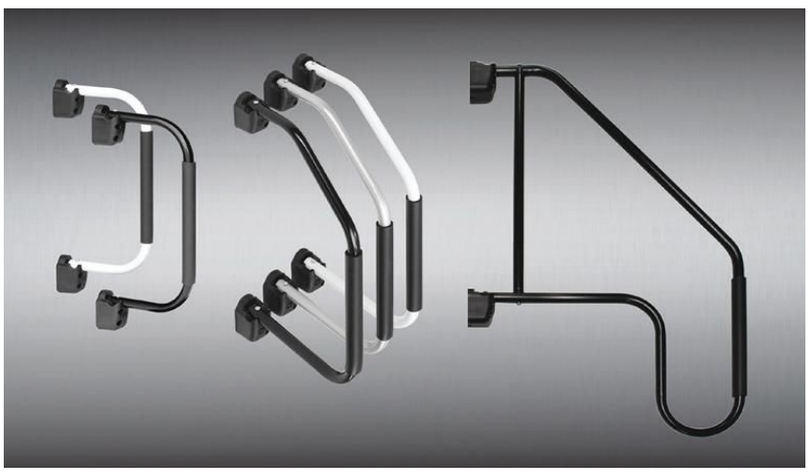




ROOF SEALANT

Sika Corp., Lyndhurst, New Jersey, offers its Sikaflex-715, a chemical curing roof sealant suitable for a wide range of RV roofing components and open joints. Sikaflex-715 is UV stable and stands up to the harshest environmental conditions, from extreme cold to hot and humid. Sikaflex-715 offers cross linking durability, has low shrinkage and low VOCS, and is crack resistant, semi self-leveling and environmentally friendly.

usa.sika.com



RV HANDRAILS

Stromberg Carlson, Traverse City, Michigan, presents its Lend-A-Hand Rail Family, which provide steady support and convenience going up or down the stairs. All are constructed of aluminum powder coated tubing with foam grip. No tools required for securing rail in open or closed positions. The AM-250 and AM-255 Mini are 22 inches long and extend 10 inches from the wall. The 27-inch AM-200 (white), AM-300 (silver sparkle) and AM-800 (black) protrudes from wall 15.5 inches. The AM-533 extends an additional 10 inches out and 13.5 inches down. Lend-A-Hand rails are also available with a key lock mounting block.

strombergcarlson.com

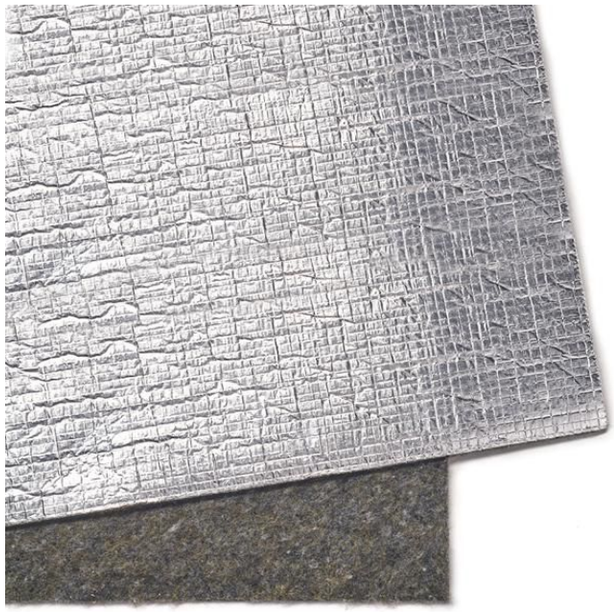




WATER HEATER

Suburban, an Airxcel brand, Dayton, Tennessee, presents its Direct Fit Water Heater. The Advantage Direct-Fit 6-gallon Water Heater by Suburban replaces select competitively sized water heaters without major modifications to sidewalls, cabinetry or plumbing for easy-fit installation. The Advantage Direct Fit Replacement Water Heater features a porcelain-lined steel tank with anode rod design to protect against corrosion plus industry-exclusive flue tube baffles to transfer more heat to water in the tank. Suburban has been located in Dayton, Tennessee, since 1947.

suburbanrv.com



HEAT & SOUND INSULATION

Thermo Tec Automotive, Greenwich, Ohio, presents its Thermo Guard FR. Designed to combat heat and noise, Thermo Guard FR offers numerous benefits. Made from synthetic fiber felt, it absorbs sound and dampens vibration. Its foil heat barrier protects against radiant heat up to 1500 F. With a 1/4-inch profile, it ensures effectiveness without sacrificing space or aesthetics. Versatile and customizable, Thermo Guard FR is ideal for trucks, RVs, cars, aircraft and homes.

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HOLDING TANK TREATMENT

Thetford, Ann Arbor, Michigan, offers its Aqua MAX, a holding tank treatment that utilizes an advanced enzyme formula to neutralize odors and accelerate waste digestion. It effectively breaks down waste to prevent clumping and tank residue buildup, and is tested safe for all RVs, marine toilets and septic systems. Aqua MAX is available in three options — liquid, dry granules and Toss-Ins — and two scents, Spring Showers or Summer Cypress.

thetford.com

SLIDEOUT SEAL

Trim-Lok, Buena Park, California presents its All-in-One Wipe Seal, which features a patented seamless corner installation method. The Wipe Seal can be turned 90 degrees for corner installations without any gaps or cuts to the bulb. Trim-Lok has more options available in its All-in-One family of RV slideout seals, including bottom pans and mating wear bars, above floor bottom pans and more.

trimlok.com





SURFACE FINISH LAYER PROTECTANT

Trinseo, Wayne, Pennsylvania, offers its INDURO Acrylic Capped Sheet. Manufactured in Florence, Kentucky, INDURO Acrylic Capped Sheet is a new addition to Trinseo's material solutions portfolio resulting from the acquisition of Aristech Surfaces. It offers a superior strength solution for a range of applications within RV and mobility markets. Providing protection from UV damage and chalking, INDURO offers five times greater surface finish layer qualities over TPO and gel coat. It also holds greater color retention and gloss level surface finish durability.

aristechsurfaces.com



RESTRING KITS

United Shade, an Airxcel brand, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Restring Kits. Repair damaged pleated shades with United Shade's Restring Kits made in Elkhart, Indiana. Compatible with most styles of pleated shades with materials to repair up to five treatments. Available in four colors: white, black, beige and gray. Easy-to-follow instructions that require only a flathead screwdriver, a Phillips screwdriver and scissors for installation (directions for two-cord day/night shades, four-cord day/night shades or two-cord night shades included). Restring kits are an economical way to extend the life of pleated shades.

unitedshade.com

AIR CONDITIONER SILENCER

WackO Products, Green Bay, Wisconsin, presents its RV AC Silencer, which reduces AC sound between 50% to 70% but increases airflow availability from 20% to 40%. The silencer includes a lifetime electrostatic filtration system, with a structurally strong three-dimensional corrugated filter. Coarse on one side and fine on the other, the system creates static electricity, eliminating dirt, pollen, lint and more. The filter is safe to vacuum or to hand-wash and air dry. Compatible with Furrion rooftop air conditioners with wall thermostats, it measures 17 inches wide, 17 inches long and 2.25 inches high. Installation takes around 15 minutes.

wackoproducts.com





RV & MARINE CLEANERS

Walex Products Co., Wilmington, North Carolina, offers its Premium RV & Marine Cleaners. The Premium Walex cleaning line includes a Black Streak Remover, Rubber Roof Cleaner and Conditioner, Awning Cleaner, and Mold and Mildew Remover, packaged in 32-ounce, 64-ounce and 1-gallon bottles. The Kitchen and Bath Cleaner and Toilet Bowl Cleaner are available in 32-ounce bottles. Dealers and consumers deserve a premium solution.

walex.com

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Pay-for-Performance Plans That Get Results

How to attract and retain the best employees.

BY PHILLIP M. PERRY

Skilled workers are hard to find — and keep. Little wonder employers are taking a fresh look at so-called "pay-for-performance" (P4P) arrangements that link part of employee compensation to workplace achievement. Such programs attract "A players" with the promise of big rewards for results that boost the bottom line.

"Pay-for-performance programs are powerful motivators," says Mae Lon Ding, president of Personnel Systems Associates. "They guide employees by highlighting what is really important in their job positions. And they demonstrate that working at the peak of an individual's abilities will be worth the effort."

Incentive pay has important advantages over seniority-based salary hikes and year-end bonus plans. "Under traditional compensation programs, employees realize that if they are good enough to survive, they will earn the same pay as the company's best performers," says Steven P. Lentini, corporate leadership and sales coach. That realization, he says, encourages mediocrity and dampens the morale of a company's top talent, who end up jumping ship for the competition.

In contrast, the measurable nature of P4P programs helps build an achievement-based work culture, while ensuring that management and staff are on the same page when it comes to goals, expectations and outcomes. They can even improve a company's system of employee review. "A P4P program can really help companies weed out underperformers, reward the top players and identify those in the middle of the pack," says Catherine Rymsha, visiting lecturer, management, at University of Massachusetts – Lowell.

Finally, compensation-based pay holds a special attraction to the fastest-growing segment of the prospect pool:

Gen Zers. "People in their 20s have very clear expectations about how they want to control their careers," says Daniel P. Moynihan, managing director at Pearl Meyer. "Giving them a modicum of compensation control does just that."

Avoid Pitfalls

As attractive as they are, P4P programs can be tricky to design well. Poorly implemented ones fail to reward good performers adequately, leading to costly morale issues. The biggest cause of failure is a lack of sufficient attention to the critical task of carefully selecting performance goals, while presenting them in the moderating context of larger company values.

"I think the biggest reason that performance-based compensation programs don't work is that the managers have not identified the possibility of unintended consequences," says Chad Prinkey, founder and CEO of Well Built Construction Consulting. "It's great that people become focused on unlocking additional performance-based compensation. But what happens when they pursue the bonus at all costs, throwing other business priorities aside?"

Prinkey gives an example: "It can be dangerous to have project managers and superintendents earn additional compensation solely on profitability. They have way more responsibilities than that, including quality and safety." Too much emphasis on the bottom line, in other words, can backfire in the form of rising accidents, shoddy customer service and defective goods.

And how about the costly ramifications of salespeople who push too hard? "Employees too attached to outcomes can fall into the trap of pushing too aggressively for revenues, with the result that customers get turned off," Lentini says. "Or they might drop prices to make their revenue targets but end up losing money."

How can employers avoid those pitfalls? Later in this article we will provide an answer to this question. First, though, here are general guidelines from workplace experts:

- **Encourage employee buy-in** — P4P initiatives will only work if employees are enthused about the possibilities. Encourage their investment in the program by involving them in the initial planning stages, working one-on-one to develop performance parameters that are appropriate, realistic and inspiring. "Let subordinates suggest how they can achieve measurable results that will support larger departmental and company-wide objectives," Ding says.
- **Think outside the box** — While most people think first of revenue goals, other categories can be equally important. How about productivity levels? Cost reductions? Quality as measured by error levels and customer feedback?
- **Create achievable goals** — "A rule of thumb is that employees should feel they have an 80% probability of achieving their assigned standards or objectives," Ding says. "So, it's really important for managers to convince their people that the bar has been set correctly, that they have a high probability of success and that supervisors will help them succeed."
- **Set meaningful percentages** — The percentage of total pay accounted for by P4P programs will vary substantially. The trick is to offer compensation that is not so low that it fails to motivate performance, but not so high that it affects company profits. "The correct percentage is a function primarily of an individual job's ability to influence a company's key performance indicators (KPIs)," Ding says. The greater the potential of a certain position to control a KPI, the higher the incentive pay percentage. Salespeople very often enjoy the highest incentive pay. "It's not unusual for bonuses in the sales department to come to 50% to 100% of base pay," Lentini says. Percentages tend to run lower in other departments, typically varying from 5% to 30%.
- **Proceed slowly** — Gradually introducing a P4P program can keep employees from reacting negatively. "When you rush a program, things get missed and people get upset,"



How Good Is Your Incentive Pay Plan?

Does your pay-for-performance plan tick all the right boxes when it comes to employee motivation? Find out by taking this quiz. Give yourself 10 points for each "Yes" answer, then total your points.

1. Have you obtained the buy-in of employees by involving them in the planning of the program?
2. Have your supervisors met one-on-one with each employee to develop goals that are achievable, motivational and productive?
3. Have you considered performance parameters such as productivity levels, cost reductions and error containment?
4. Do the percentages of total pay made up of P4P bonuses reflect each position's potential effect on a KPI?
5. Are you introducing the program slowly, on a test or pilot program basis?
6. Have you considered customer feedback surveys and value scorecards as tools for tempering any abuse of the bonus pay system?
7. Have you included support staff in a P4P program?
8. Have you considered department and company-wide P4P plans in addition to individual ones?
9. Have you scheduled periodic one-on-one consultations with employees to obtain feedback on incentive pay initiatives?
10. Does top management enthusiastically support your P4P program?

What's your score? **Over 80:** Success! You are creating an effective pay-for-performance bonus program. **Between 60 and 80:** Time to fine-tune your management practices. **Below 60:** It's a good idea to re-gear by instituting ideas from the accompanying story.

Lentini says. To determine what works and what doesn't in a particular work environment, companies are advised to begin with test programs that last a year or more and that reward performance with praise and personnel file entries rather than money. "Periodically give employees reports showing what they are making under the company's old compensation program and what that would look like under the new one," Lentini says. "This allows them to see what behaviors they will need to adjust."

Communicate Values

Now let's address the problem mentioned earlier in this article: How can P4P arrangements reward high performers while discouraging the pursuit of performance goals at the expense of other business priorities? The solution is to hinge incentive pay on conformance to a company's larger values.

Consider the example of the salesperson who becomes overly aggressive with customers in order to meet a revenue goal. "Employers need to continually communicate that today's sales methodology is to help people buy," Lentini says. "The salesperson needs to listen to customers and solve their problems."

Judging how well employees conform to company values can be more difficult than clocking measurable job tasks. Here's where customer surveys can help. At many companies, Ding says, feedback from third parties accounts for 10% of the total performance assessment for many job positions, with performance-based assessments making up the other 90%. There are exceptions, she notes. "Feedback surveys might account for 50% to 60% of the assessment at customer service jobs."

Third-party reports are not a panacea. "The challenge with customer metrics is that people only chime in when somebody does an exceptional job or a less-than-good job," Rymsha says. "In the middle zone, people typically don't have much of an opinion and tend to sit on the sidelines."

An alternative to customer feedback, or perhaps an adjunct, is a so-called "values scorecard," used by supervisors to assess how well an employee's actions align with a company's guiding principles. Depending on the job position, such values might include customer-centered decision-making, teamwork, communications skills, ethics, kindness, attendance, punctuality and safety. "An employee's eligibility for a

performance-based bonus may hinge on how well they have met the employer's larger cultural and ethical requirements," Prinkey says.

Reward Everyone

Assessing the job performance of the sales staff and others with measurable duties may be relatively straightforward. But how can P4P arrangements reward those in supporting roles such as receptionists, office managers, bookkeepers and accountants?

"Probably the hardest people in any business to include in an incentive pay program are the administrative professionals," Moynihan says. "It's really difficult to come up with scalable measurements for employees with multiple concurrent tasks who keep the train running for everyone else."

Moynihan suggested trying to isolate little slices of such jobs that can improve efficiency, reduce costs or enhance customer service. Does a receptionist answer the phone within two rings to decrease the client wait time? Has a bookkeeper reduced the costs of paper, ink and other office materials? Has a secretary taken the initiative to update digital calendars and make needed appointments?

If all else fails, the employer can pull the support staff into a higher-level bonus system based on overall profitability. "A company-wide pool can be established for those who are not in direct revenue-generating kind of roles," Prinkey says. "Their eligibility for the awards can hinge on the results of their values scorecards."

Well-designed P4P programs can attract top performers to a company and retain them with incentive bonuses linked to measurable goals that support a company's overriding principles. But top management must be sold on the potential of such a program to drive company success.

"An incentive payment program has to start with the CEO being a true believer," Ding says. "Otherwise, line managers will not take the program seriously." RVP



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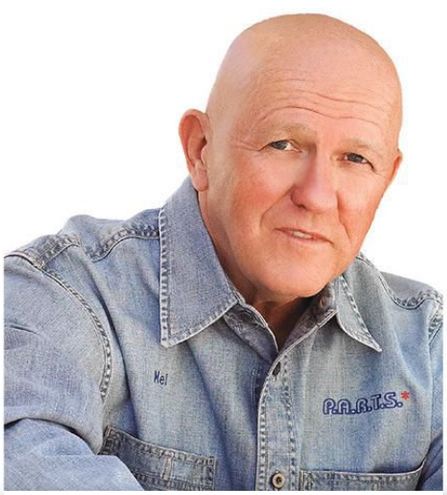


RECTifying Your Operations, Part 1

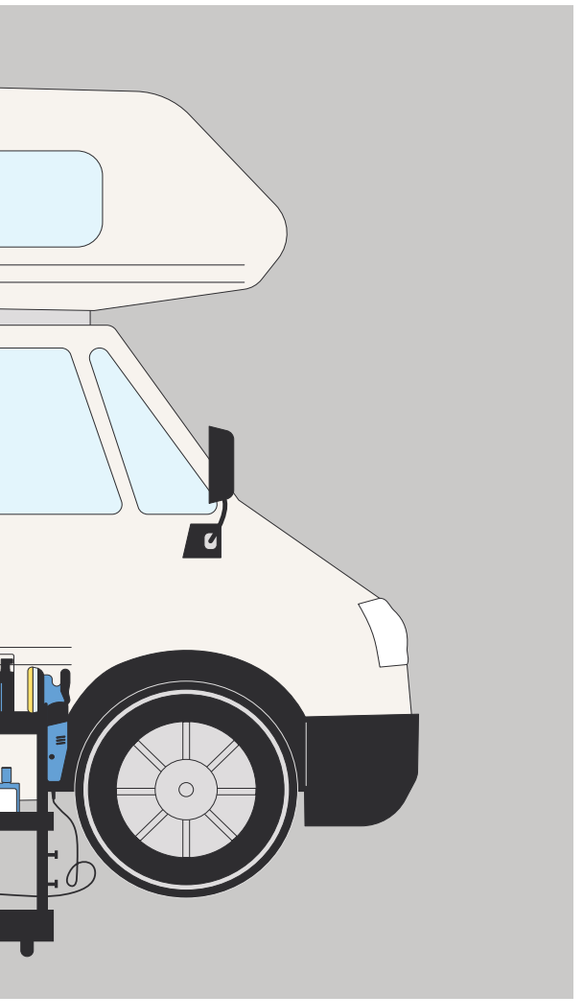
Ways to reduce your dealership's repair event cycle time and improve operational efficiency.

Repair event cycle time (RECT) is a popular topic of interest within the RV industry. Recent articles in RV PRO either focus on this subject or mention it. One of the workshop ideas being solicited for the 2024 RVDA Convention concerns strategies and tactics for improving RECT. My professional experience as a parts manager/director and fixed operations consultant support this interest in RECT and its impact on a business' profitability and customer service.

For these reasons and others that will be introduced, I have developed a series of monthly columns devoted to methods that you might consider as part of your plan to RECTify your operations by improving your RECT. Since RECTify and RECT will be used throughout this series of columns, it is important that I



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.



> “APPLY A DIFFERENT SET OF WORDS TO RECT (RESEARCHING, EVOLVING & CHANGING TECHNIQUES).”

define these two terms as they apply to the concepts, techniques and tools that will be introduced.

- RECTify: verb meaning to make, put or set right; remedy; corRECT.
- RECT: a term representing “repair event cycle time,” used to measure the performance of the fixed operations within a business.

Thinking Outside the Box

Some of the concepts, techniques and tools that are included to assist you in RECTifying your operations might require you to modify some of your policies and procedures, or even to develop new ones. Each monthly column will address at least one and possibly two sides of this six-sided box of suggestions to assist you in reducing your RECT, improving your operational efficiency and enhancing your customer service. One of those six sides will be open for you to include policies and processes that you might already be applying or that you might develop as you read this series of columns. Yes, to reduce your RECT, you will probably have to exert some extra effort at least initially to achieve the efficiencies that I believe could be available to you.

To justify these efforts, I refer you to three metrics resulting from an RV manufacturer quality survey of the greatest issues facing dealerships in 2024, which were reported in the March 2024 issue of RV PRO. These percentages represent the number of responding dealerships that believe this factor is important, and they are:

- Competition at 17.88%: By increasing the amount of operating expense absorption by the fixed operations departments, it could assist the unit sales department to offer more competitive pricing of the RVs.
- Labor at 29.14%: By reducing RECT, the amount of available labor hours to sell increases — which increases the opportunity for greater fixed ops absorption and the realization that perhaps you don’t require additional technicians.
- Inflation at 66.89%: Through more efficient operations, perhaps the number of personnel could be decreased, which reduces operating expenses and increases profitability. According to a study referenced in a business publication several years ago, the average worker operated at an 80% efficiency level. Therefore, to achieve 400% performance, a business would require five employees. However, if each worker was at least 100% efficient, then only four employees would be required.

If you are concerned about any (or all) of these three challenges to your business operations for 2024 and beyond, please continue reading to learn about some opportunities to RECTify your operations and to reduce your RECT.

Side One of the Box — TTWWADI or RECT?

As a fixed operations consultant, I am contracted to assist clients with resolving challenges to their operating efficiency and profits. After an initial tour of their operations and introductions to their personnel, I look at their facility and watch their staff because, to quote Yogi Berra, “You can observe a lot just by watching.”

After observing their physical operations and reviewing some of their computer reports, I will have developed a list of questions for the owners/managers with whom I am working. Most of these questions will be of the format: Why are you performing this operation in this manner? Quite often, their reply is “that’s the way we’ve always done it” (TTWWADI). This is a challenge yet also an opportunity because if the intent is to reduce the RECT, then it can be assumed that doing things the way they have always been done could be a part of the problem with the poorly performing RECT data.

By applying a different set of words to RECT, which are “researching, evolving and changing techniques,” it could be possible to identify some inefficient processes. It could be that an inefficient process is impacting the efficiency of your technicians, which adds to your RECT. My experience in and with dealerships is that special


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service tool control is frequently a cause of technician inefficiency. Per the RECT noted in the first sentence of this paragraph, research your special service tool control process. While performing this research, ask these questions:

1. Where are the special service tools stored? If there isn't a designated, secure area, then perhaps it requires some of a technician's time to locate a tool.
2. What method is used to determine which technician is currently using a tool? If a technician requires a tool that is not in its designated location, then she might have to check with each of the other technicians before she is able to procure and use the tool.
3. Who is responsible to ensure that each special service tool is actually in the dealership? How frequently are these verifications processed?
4. What is the procedure for ordering a replacement for any missing tool? What individual or department will pay for that replacement? If the dealership must incur the expense of replacing a missing tool, how much does that impact the profitability of the service operations?
5. Who must inform a customer that their scheduled maintenance or repair cannot be performed? How does this impact the customer's decision to remain a customer of your dealership? If a scheduled service cannot be performed, how does this impact your RECT?

This is one of the many processes within your fixed operations that could be negatively impacting your RECT. In previous issues of RV PRO, I have introduced my concept of Detailed Written Procedures (DWP). After researching your special service tool control processes, I suggest that you either update your current DWP or develop one. Efficient processes are a tool for improving personnel efficiency, which can reduce your RECT.

Special service tool control is just one process related to this first side of the box. In next month's issue of RV PRO, we will review more side(s) of the box and offer additional concepts, techniques and tools for reducing your RECT. RVP





ADOBE STOCK



Wake Up Before They Go Go ...

Strategies for improving workplace satisfaction and employee retention at your dealership.



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.

You can thank or curse me later for the earworm, but for now, please read on for some ideas on how to keep your RV employees content and productive. Learning the RV business is highly specialized, and for the people who chose to work at your dealership, the learning curve is high — as can be the rewards. If you are experiencing more people quitting the business or switching their allegiance to your competition, it's time to look at the whys as well as the hows to keep the people you want.

People leave for many reasons, and the only way to understand why is to ask. While that can feel very uncomfortable, it's important to know

what caused someone to want or need to leave your organization. Many of us dislike confrontation. But asking someone why they are moving on doesn't need to be a negative conversation. It can be simple honesty: "I appreciate you and your work ethic and am just wondering why you're leaving."

Of course, if you had issues with that person, they may be leaving because they picked up on your dissatisfaction with them.

Looking back on my many years working in retail, I realized that I left jobs either because it was time for more responsibility, my (then) husband was transferred to another state, or the person or some of the people I was working for were making me unhappy. I was never asked why I was leaving. If I liked and respected the person I worked for, I told them what was going on. If I didn't, I kept quiet. Had they asked, I would have been honest about the overt sexism or disorganization leading to chaos, or the alternating nice/angry boss where I was constantly walking on eggshells. Only one man asked me why I was leaving my job as visual merchandising manager as he thought I was doing a great job. I told him that moment was the first time since joining Macy's that I heard anything positive or negative about my work. Had I thought I was appreciated, I wouldn't have been looking for a new job. But it was too late for Macy's, and I happily moved on.

> **"IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT CAUSED SOMEONE TO WANT OR NEED TO LEAVE YOUR ORGANIZATION."**

When millennials were joining the workforce years ago, I remember people complaining that they wanted too much feedback and praise. That was a wake-up call for anyone who was listening. If you appreciate your employees (of any age), let them know.

Showing Your Appreciation

In my research for this column, I found some creative ways managers showed their appreciation. One manager with a team of 10 people personalized the employees' paychecks. Even if your employees get direct deposit, this can still be done via email or actual notes. "I have a small unit of 10 reporting to me. I write a personal note every two-week period, and it goes with their paychecks. Every two weeks it forces me to think about something I noticed and appreciated. I've gotten great feedback on that!"

Another manager would quarterly ask her team to submit someone else's name and an accomplishment that impressed them. She read over all the accomplishments and gave a day off to the award winner. It gave her a chance to see achievements she didn't know about, plus it gave everyone a chance to recognize their teammates.

One dealership created a "wall of fame." Every time any employee received a letter, email or positive call from a customer, it was framed and put up on the wall. The manager also gave that employee a small gift certificate, but the framed letters meant more than the gift certificate. Customers enjoy reading the letters, and it helped internal relations as well.

Time is precious and time off can be a highly appreciated gift. When someone goes above and beyond or makes a great sale under difficult conditions, time off (to be determined by need,



desire or appropriateness) can be highly motivating and a great reward.

Stress can cause colds, flu, stomach issues — all sorts of miserable reactions to anxiety. If you have an employee that seems to be constantly ill, it makes sense to sit down with them to discuss the possible reasons for their illnesses. It's worth looking at what may be stressing them out and weakening their immune system.

Everyone reacts to stress differently. That doesn't make them a better, worse, weak or strong employee — they are just human. You can ask about their stress level and if it's work related. If so, discuss how their stress could be lessened. If they are unable to do their job, perhaps it's a work/life balance issue or potentially some extra training would be a good investment in them and for your company.

Investing in Employees & Work/Life Balance

I have discovered that far too many people are thrown into jobs with little or no training. Then, when they screw up and/or stress out, they are perceived as unintelligent, high-maintenance or unworthy.

No one can psychically figure out your systems, desires, needs and processes — these require training. Even a highly experienced sales or service person needs to learn what your dealership requires.

Good training sets your employees up for success. Inadequate or no training with expectations of "learning on the job" sets them up for early failures.

Work/life balance is an issue that impacts many people. When we stop and think about our life, it is our families, health, friends and spirit that give our lives meaning. Our work takes up a good percentage of our time and gives us the money to live, but without joy in our work, it saps our energy.

Look at what you are promoting at work. Are you a workaholic? Do you promote and reward workaholism? Do you expect your employees to work every weekend? Do you hold numerous early morning or early evening meetings? Do you compliment employees for working long hours — or for the quality of work they perform?

"INADEQUATE OR NO TRAINING WITH EXPECTATIONS OF 'LEARNING ON THE JOB' SETS THEM UP FOR EARLY FAILURES."

Flexibility is key to creating a positive work environment. We can't just let everyone do what they want to do all the time, but you can be flexible when it's important to the person.

And yes, some people will try to take advantage of your kindness and flexibility. You need to find your balance with that as well.

An astute manager will view work/life balance and stress reduction as smart and strategic business tools rather than employee perks.

When people feel heard and appreciated, and have balance in their lives, there is a far greater chance they will work harder, produce more and be loyal to you and your dealership.

If you have found successful and positive ways to retain and encourage your employees, please share them with me, lindacahan@gmail.com, and I will incorporate them into a future column. RVP





How To Create a Culture That People Don't Want To Leave

5 steps that will turn negative thoughts into positive actions.

BY JESSICA RECTOR

Do you have a Negative Nancy (NN) or Toxic Tim (TT) that you're keeping longer than you should? Would you let them go if you weren't so short staffed? One Negative Nancy or Toxic Tim infiltrates the whole company and it spreads throughout, affecting everyone.

Think of it like this: You attend a meeting that NN was in. When you leave, you approach Positive Polly and share with Positive Polly, "It's so frustrating dealing with NN. Why is she still here? All we do is constantly listen to her babble and unhappiness."

Before you know it, you become a Negative Nancy, and Positive Polly sees the impact the original NN has made on you and the team. It only takes one person thinking negatively to bring the whole environment, culture and team down. In order to help you, Positive Polly shares the following.

You have 60,000 thoughts a day and 80% of them are negative. These come in the form of doubt, worry and stress and are linked to poor attitudes, declining engagement and poor performance.



OLGA YASTREMSKA, NEW AFRICA, AFRICA STUDIO/ADOBE STOCK

Most people think they are positive and optimistic, yet negativity shows and they don't recognize it. In fact, 95% of your thoughts are repetitive. So, all the negative thoughts keep getting repeated, impacting how you show up, speak out, lead and live.

Your thoughts are the fundamental foundation of everything you do and everything you don't do, yet often you don't think about them. When was the last time you thought about what you thought about?

If you're like most people, you think the same way you've always thought, resulting in the same behaviors, actions and results. If you want to change relationships, communication, interactions and/or your confidence, you must first change how you think. Once you change that, then everything else will change as well.

Here is a five-step process to help you change your thoughts to invoke different actions, behaviors and results and develop a positive work environment.

1. **Identify —** Recognize your thoughts. There's an exercise to help you very specifically identify your negative thoughts. It's called the Stand-up/Sit-down exercise. This is a great exercise to do as a team. Have someone read a set of statements. For every statement you agree with, you will move your body. Everyone starts in a stand-up position. For example, if the first statement is "If you've ever thought you're not smart enough," and you agree, you'll sit down. If you disagree with the statement, you'll remain as you were. If the next statement is, "If you've ever thought you don't have enough time," and you agree, you'll move (either stand up or sit down depending on what you did for the first statement). This repeats for every statement read (there should be about 15 statements read).

During this activity, you can expect to hear laughter from your group, as they are moving for most of them, which shows that negative thinking





arises without you consciously knowing — and you have a lot more of them than you believe.

2. **Write it** — Once you've identified your negative thoughts, it's important to write them down. Something happens in your brain when you write things down. They tend to become real, and you remember them more. So, when you write down your negative thoughts, you become more mindful when they arise. Follow the rest of the process with just one of your negative thoughts. Once you have mastered one, work on another (you don't want to overwhelm yourself or burn out on doing too many at once).

3. **Triggers** — What are your triggers for your negative thinking? Triggers can be a place, situation, mood, experience or thing. If you've ever had a conversation with someone and walked away saying to yourself, "Why do I even bother?" then you also know a trigger can be a person, too. Write down all of your triggers. When you're aware of your triggers, you can be on the lookout for them. When they come up, as they will, you are armed to not allow the negative thoughts to follow.

> **"NOTHING CHANGES UNTIL YOU TAKE ACTION, AND EVEN A SMALL ACTION MAKES A DIFFERENCE ... SMALL, CONSISTENT ACTION IS KEY TO ERADICATING NEGATIVE THINKING."**

4. **Reframe** — List all the ways to reframe the negative thought. There are two ways to do this reframing. First, you can say the opposite of the negative statement. Instead of saying "I'm not a good enough leader," you can say, "I'm an awesome leader."

The second way is to ask questions. For instance, what courses do I need to take to become a better leader, what leadership book should





I read to improve my leadership skills, or who can mentor me to help me become a better leader? Your brain is constantly talking to you. If you say you're not a good enough leader, your brain will validate it with all the ways that it's true. If you say you're an awesome leader, your brain will validate it with all the ways that it's true. So, listening to the positive part of your brain will make all the difference in your work and life.

5. **Action —** Once you have your reframing options, pick one to take action on. Nothing changes until you take action, and even a small action makes a huge difference. For example, look up leadership books on Google, or ask friends for their recommendations or look up Amazon book reviews. Then take one small action after another. Small, consistent action is key to eradicating negative thinking.



ADOBE STOCK

The more you work through this process, the more positive thoughts you have. You'll soon recognize negative thoughts in others and can help them master their own mindset. You'll become the Positive Polly and help develop a positive work environment that no one wants to leave. RVP

Jessica Rector, MBA, author of the No. 1 bestselling "Blaze Your Brain to Extinguish Burnout" and nine other books, helps organizations, leaders and teams "Say Yes" to eradicate burnout and enhance mental health. As a burnout trailblazer, her research is used in her consulting and speaking and often shared on her podcast, "The Say Yes Experience." For more information, visit jessicarector.com.





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Pit Stop



A Summer To Seek

Wellness travel (those seeking a digital detox and solace in serene places) **and solo adventures** are emerging as top Pinterest travel searches this summer. In addition:



- Searches for "adventure activities" is up 45% year-over-year, with "adventure camping" up 44%. Top adventure destinations are Tanzania and the Philippines.
- On the other end, searches for "quiet life" are up 530%, showing post-pandemic quests for well-being are still prominent.
  - Among quiet travel trends, "national park" is up 250% and "solo travel" is up 35%. Top quiet destinations are Okinawa, Japan, and the English countryside.
- Travelers are craving places with mystery and allure. Among "quest for wonder" trends, "places on Earth that do not feel real" searches are up 240%, with "calming nature" up 340%. Abandoned places and ancient city searches also saw upticks.
- Gen Z users are increasingly searching for road trips and travel with friends as an affordable option to split travel costs.
  - Among Gen Z searches, "nature with friends" is up 50% and "what to bring on a road trip" up 66%. The generation's most-searched destination is Jasper, Canada.

SOURCE: 2024 PINTEREST SUMMER TRAVEL REPORT

APRIL SHIPMENTS

34,197 (units)
Total RV shipments

9.5% increase compared to April 2023 (31,216 units)

To date, RVs are up 9.4% with 120,138 shipped through April

"We are encouraged by the continued incremental increases we have been seeing in RV shipments over the past six months," said Craig Kirby, RVIA president and CEO. "In this budget-conscious environment, consumers are looking for more affordable travel options for their summer trips. RVing is the choice for over 45 million Americans this summer because they can create lifelong memories with family and friends while also saving up to 60% compared to traditional air/hotel vacation."



45 million American leisure travelers are gearing up for summer RV adventures, with 18 million taking Memorial Day trips as a kickoff to the travel season. Their top motivations for RVing are:

- Love of road trips and freedom to explore at their own pace
- Having home comforts like beds, kitchens and bathrooms on the go
- Eager to recreate past positive experiences with RVs
- Desire to immerse in scenic destinations
- Cost effectiveness, especially for families or groups

SOURCE: RVIA, CAIRN CONSULTING



A recent Outdoorsy survey found today's always-on work culture is negatively impacting young families on the road — cutting into quality time and reducing enjoyment for **Gen Z parents** in particular.

- Gen Z is most likely to take work on the road — 74% say they work at least sometimes during a trip and 96% report work hours negatively impact time with family.
- Gen X (born 1965-1980) showed a healthier work-life balance with 53% reporting that they work during family trips.

SOURCE: OUTDOORSY

The Canadian RV Association (CRVA) reported Q1 wholesale shipments into Canada totaled 8,086 units — **an increase of 14.2% year-over-year** compared to the 7,082 units shipped in 2023.

"As economic conditions stabilize, anticipated interest rate cuts take place and consumer confidence grows, it is expected that more and more individuals and families will look at RVs as a viable option for travel and leisure, and will look to purchase a new RV for the summer months."

SOURCE: CRVA

PICK YOUR NEXT DATE

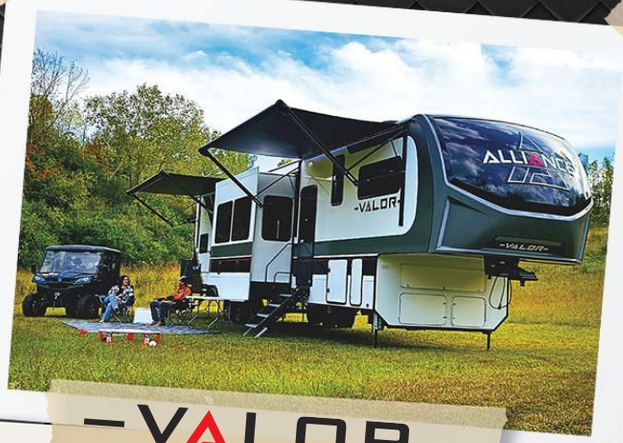
MORE HOOK-UPS THAN JUST WATER AND SEWER



PARADIGM

INTERESTS: Long-term camping and road trips.

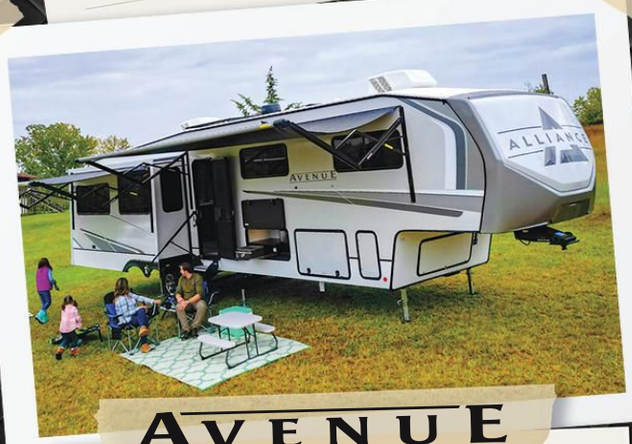
BEST QUALITIES: Luxury fifth-wheel living that sleeps up to 6 guests.



–VALOR–

INTERESTS: ATV off-roading and nights by the campfire.

BEST QUALITIES: Superior toy-hauler with a big trunk for all the activities.



AVENUE

INTERESTS: Family outings, hiking and sight-seeing.

BEST QUALITIES: Perfect union of luxury and towability fifth-wheel.



DELTA

INTERESTS: Weekend trips and sporting events.

BEST QUALITIES: Lightweight travel trailer to load and go.

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