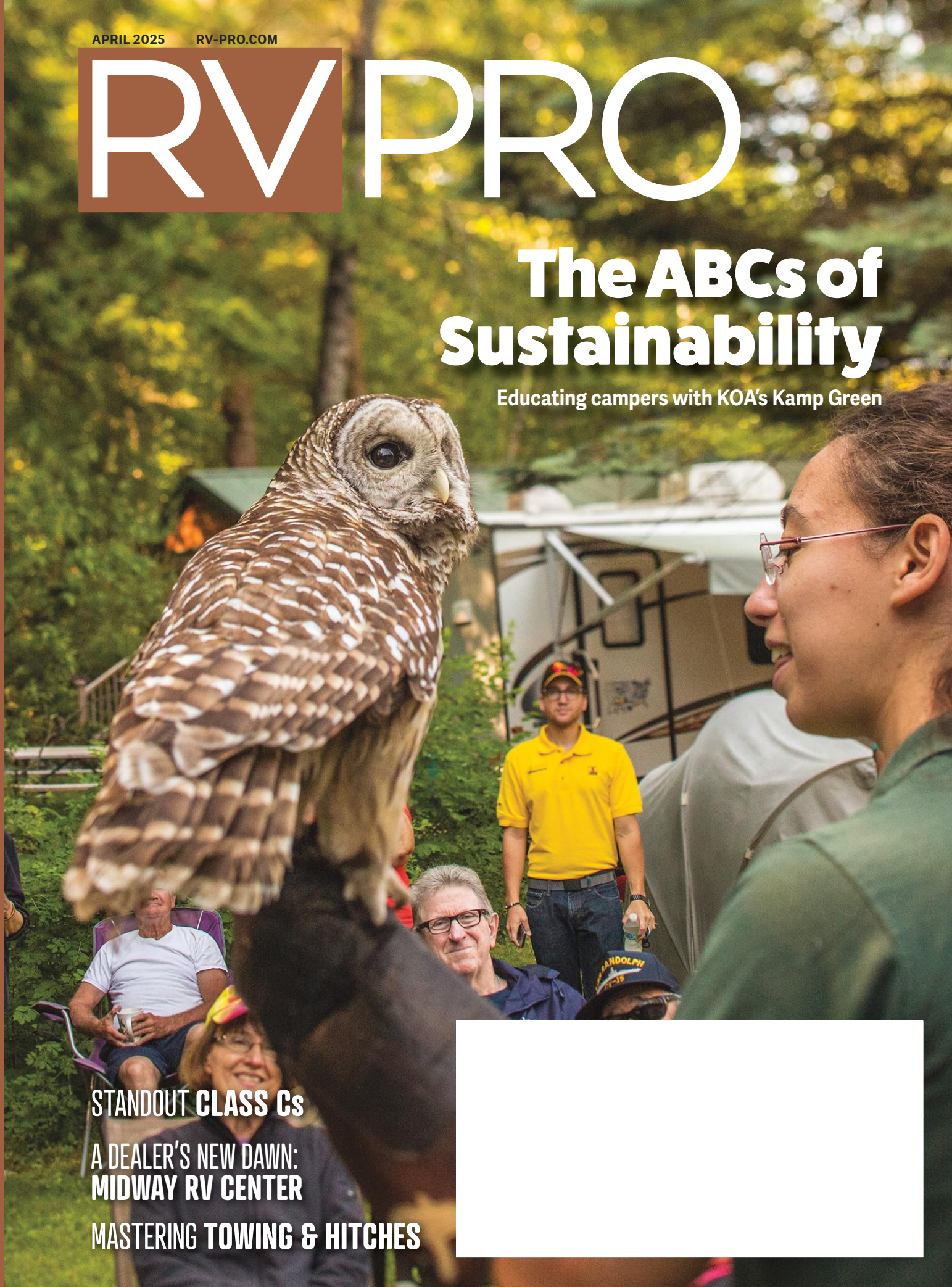
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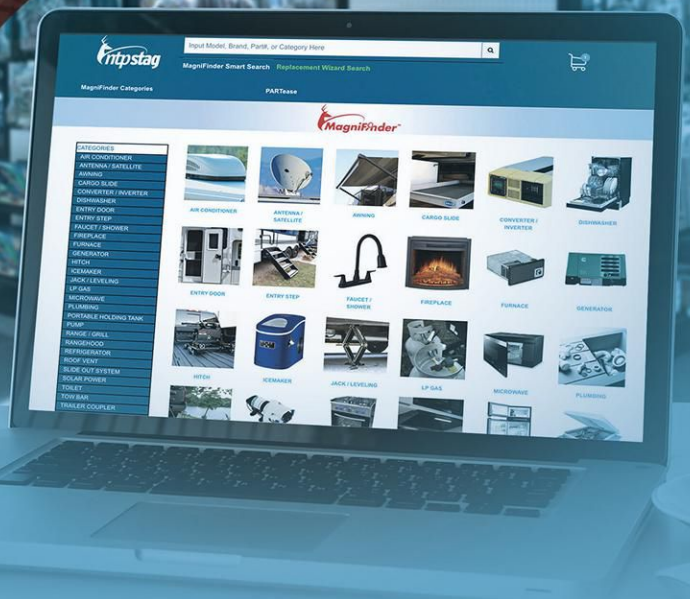
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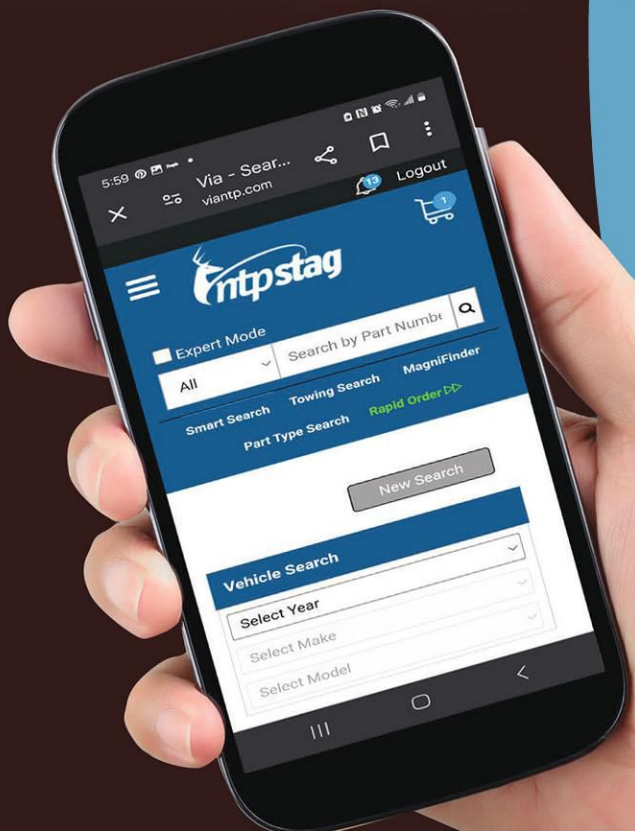




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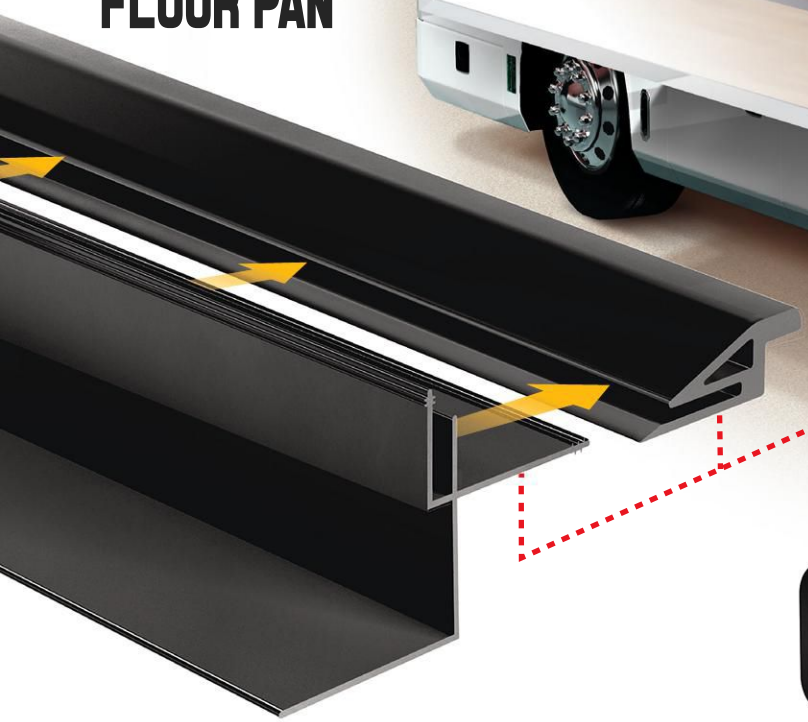


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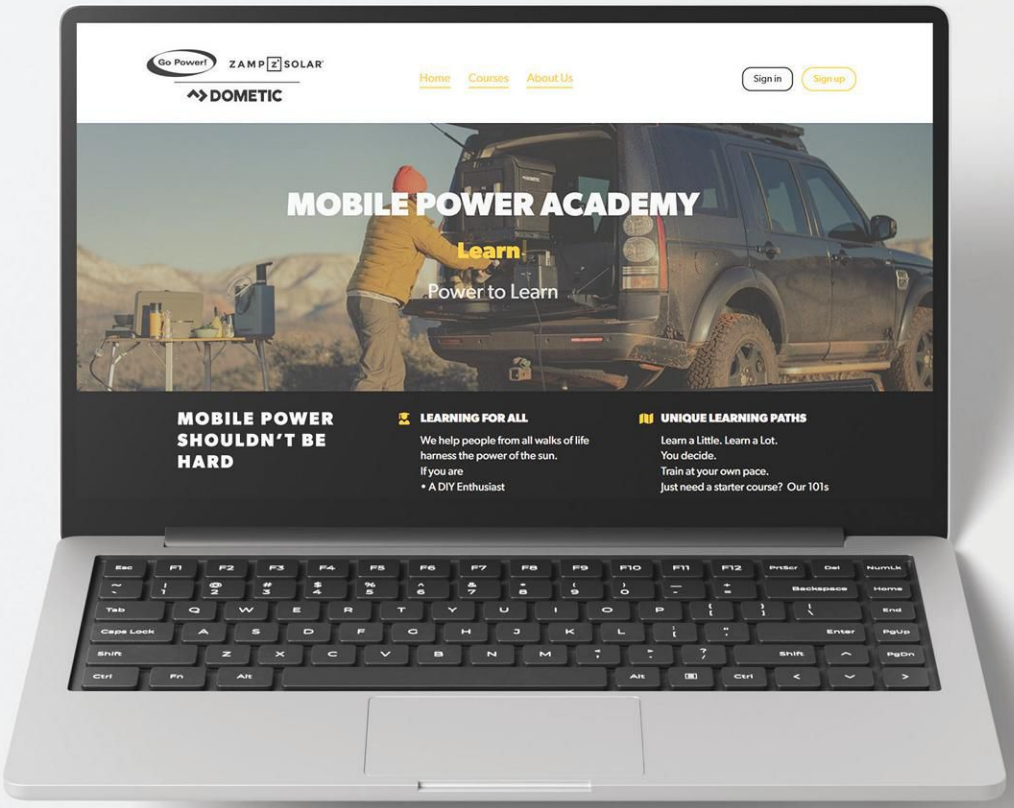
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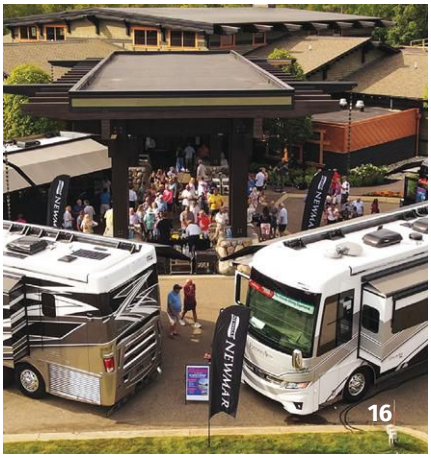
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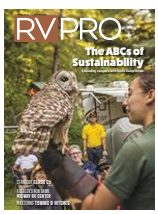
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KOA's Kamp Green program encourages educational experiences. Photo courtesy of Kampgrounds of America.

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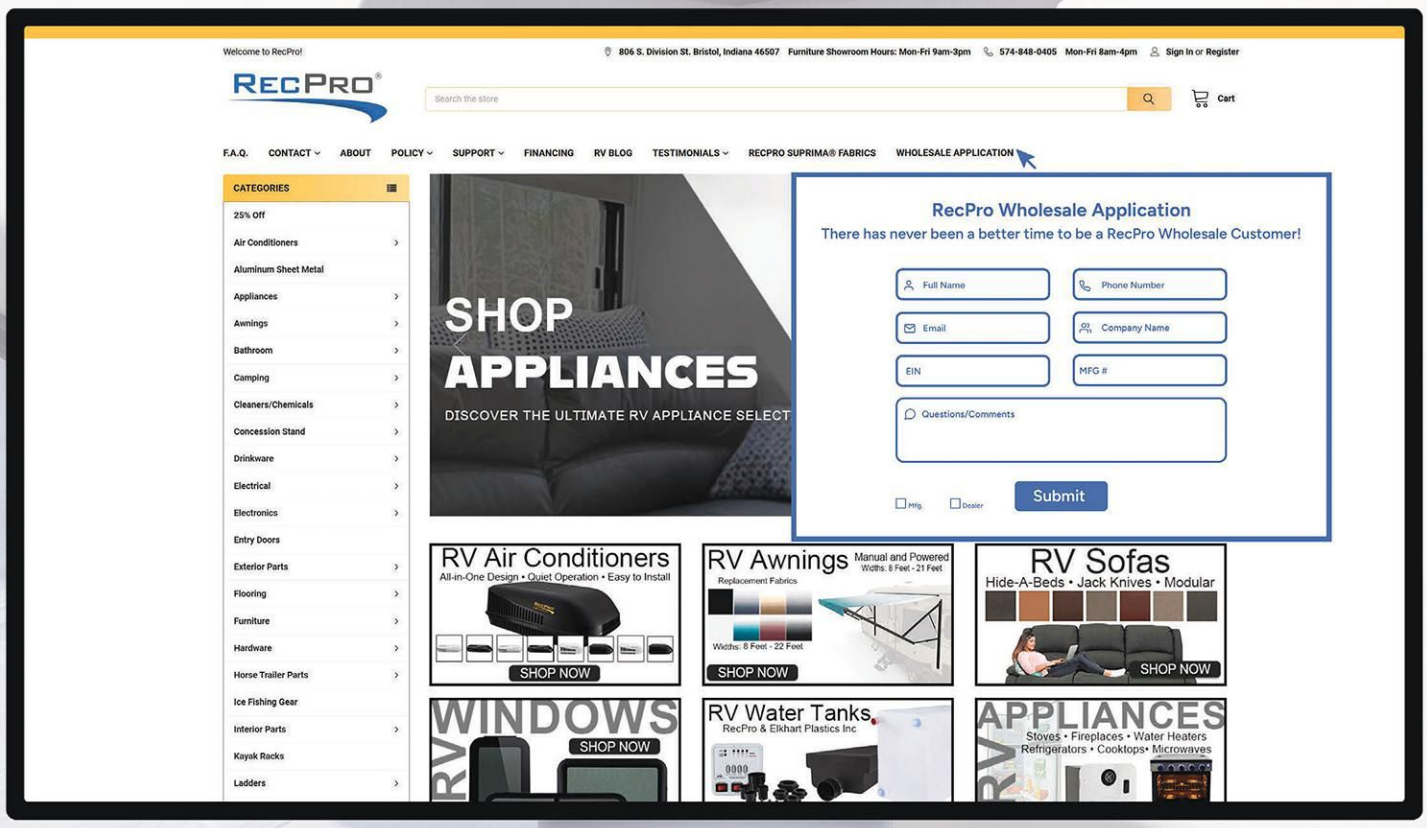
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Jennifer King

With more than 85 million acres to care for and 325 million visitors to attend to, the federal employees of the National Park Service (NPS) are not just highly regarded and appreciated, they are necessary.

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson founded the National Park Service with a mission to preserve "unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations."

The National Park System consists of 433 areas, including in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. These areas include national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House.

Campers are one of the largest groups to take in the beauty, education and inspiration of our national parks. According to a recent report from The Dyrt, 4 out of 5 campers plan to visit a national park this year. Among young campers, ages 18-34, 92% are planning to visit a national park this year, according to the surveys, which were conducted with three groups late in 2024.

"It's been said that our national parks are national treasures, and I wholeheartedly agree," says The Dyrt CEO Kevin Long. "Setting up a campsite amidst the natural wonder, among the native wildlife, staring off into the unchanged landscape — national parks provide an iconic setting for a camping trip."

In 2023, the most recent year for which data is available, more than 2.5 million RVers stayed overnight in a national park, according to the NPS. With that many visitors enjoying the beauty of Yellowstone, Mount Rushmore, Gettysburg, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and more, what impacts the NPS also impacts the RV industry.

It's no wonder that outdoor organizations jumped to the aid of NPS employees when, in February, the Trump administration announced it would lay off federal workers from the NPS, including critical employees needed to collect entrance fees, maintain trails, clean restrooms and care for facilities, and more.

Thankfully, the ability to hire seasonal workers was reinstated, and the NPS will now be able to add 7,700 seasonal employees, hopefully in time for the busy summer months when visitor numbers grow. (This editor's letter is based on knowledge of news available as of Feb. 27.)

Speaking to the Los Angeles Times, Kristen Brengel, senior vice president of government affairs for the National Parks Conservation Association, says the reprieve is "definitely a win." She credits the "advocates, park rangers and everyone else who has been shouting from the mountaintop that we need these positions restored."

We often talk about RVing as a chance to escape the daily grind, get away with the family and surround yourself with nature, a time to truly "unplug." We should also remember how much effort goes into making those campsites workable, the trails passable, the restrooms usable, and how much we learn and lean on park rangers and other staff for guidance, education and even first aid or rescue.

As we bring you our annual sustainability section in this issue, we highlight the people and businesses who are making it possible to have an RV industry that operates with the well-being of our shared environment in mind. This industry takes pride in being good stewards of the land we enjoy traveling to and camping on. Part of that is incorporating more sustainable as businesses practices — and also supporting those who make visiting those beautiful places possible.

As Wallace Stegner, an American novelist and environmentalist, said in 1983: "National parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst."

The National Parks are one of our best ideas, and the NPS employees are some of the best people among us.

As always, thanks for reading!

Jennifer King

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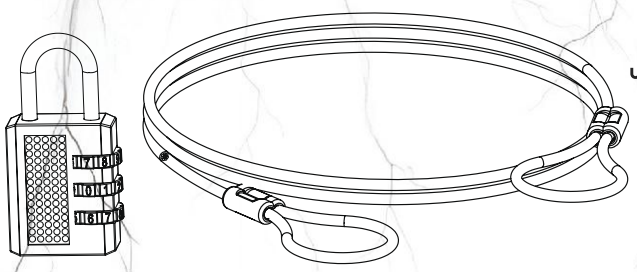
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Winnebago Names Senior VP of Enterprise Operations


Speich

Winnebago Industries announced that Steve Speich joined the organization as senior vice president of enterprise operations, effective March 3.

Speich joined Winnebago Industries after more than two decades as a manufacturing leader at John Deere, bringing significant operations leadership experience to the role. Speich most recently served as global director of manufacturing for Deere's Intelligent Solutions group, with ownership of end-to-end factory operations, inclusive of manufacturing and supply chain responsibilities. Immediately prior to this position, Speich served in two other global director roles, overseeing supply chain management globally in Deere's fastest growing business segment, as well as facility engineering and factory automation initiatives across 60 global sites.

"After an extensive search to find Winnebago Industries' next operations leader, we are excited to welcome Steve, an experienced and highly accomplished manufacturing leader, to our executive leadership team," said Winnebago Industries President and CEO Michael Happe. "With a reputation for delivering exceptional business results, he will bring a wealth of knowledge, innovative strategies and a strong commitment to operational excellence that will drive our company forward and enhance our competitive edge in the industry."

In his new leadership role, Speich oversees Winnebago Industries' manufacturing capabilities, strategic sourcing program, business excellence initiatives, product quality management and employee health, safety and security efforts, partnering deeply with the company's various business units to drive industry-best performance and synergy across the enterprise, Winnebago said.

"I am excited to join the Winnebago Industries team and contribute to the company's legacy of innovation and excellence," said Speich. "I look forward to working with the talented teams to drive growth, enhance operational efficiencies and deliver exceptional value to our customers and stakeholders."

Speich's appointment follows the transition of Chris West, former senior vice president of enterprise operations, who was recently named president of the company's Winnebago-branded motorhome business.

Lippert Names VP of Business Development


Rackleff

Lippert Components announced the promotion of Eddie Rackleff to vice president of business development — North American Motorized segment.

Rackleff, a 16-year veteran of Lippert, has been instrumental in driving the company's growth and solidifying its reputation in the recreation and transportation industries. Under his leadership, Lippert has experienced incredible growth as the company has elevated from $1.5 billion in revenue in 2018 to $4 billion in 2024. His diverse skill set — from his technical experience to his deep customer relationships and understanding of the industries — has positioned him as a trusted leader and key contributor to Lippert's success, the company said.

In his expanded role, Rackleff will lead Lippert's efforts to strengthen the company's position in the motorhome market, driving innovation and aligning the company's offerings with the unique needs of motorhome manufacturers. With extensive experience in his past sales role, Rackleff brings a deep understanding of customer priorities and a proven ability to cultivate lasting partnerships.

"I'm thrilled to take on this role as we focus on advancing Lippert's presence in the motorhome market," said Rackleff. "Lippert's culture of innovation and service has always driven me, and I'm excited to channel that energy into this new chapter. The motorhome industry is evolving, and Lippert is committed to being at the forefront, delivering products and solutions that enhance the experience for manufacturers and end-users alike."

Jason Lippert, president and CEO of Lippert, emphasized the significance of Rackleff's role: "Eddie's leadership and dedication have been critical to Lippert's success over the last almost two decades. Eddie has been instrumental in helping develop new products based on our customers' needs along with fostering meaningful relationships with so many customers he has ownership of. He's been impressive to watch over the years and has set a great example for so many people in the company while collaborating with them. Our motorhome business needs a leader with Eddie's caliber, and the motorhome market is large enough to begin to separate it more from our towable RV components business. With this renewed focus on the motorhome market, Eddie's ability to build strong relationships coupled with his deep knowledge of all our products makes him the perfect leader to help us deliver even greater value to our motorhome customers while he continues to lead our West Coast sales force on all RV and utility trailer products."

Rackleff's promotion signals Lippert's dedication to investing in both its team and the motorhome market, ensuring the company remains a trusted partner in delivering innovative, customer-centric solutions, the company said.

Cummins Appoints Two to Leadership Team

Cummins Inc. announced two important changes to the Cummins leadership team, effective March 15.

"Cummins is fortunate to have strong and capable leaders who are dedicated to advancing our Destination Zero strategy and delivering outstanding results for our customers and business," said Jennifer Rumsey, chair and CEO of Cummins. "I am proud to promote two experienced, people-centered leaders who embody our company's commitment to living Cummins' values, delivering innovative solutions for our customers and driving strategic and operational excellence."


Fetch

Bonnie Fetch has been named executive vice president and president of operations. Fetch succeeded Srikanth Padmanabhan, who announced his retirement in January.

Fetch has extensive experience in a variety of general management, human resources and supply chain leadership roles, including 20 years at Caterpillar before joining Cummins. Since joining Cummins in

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2018, Fetch has demonstrated exceptional business leadership, a people-centered leadership style and extensive strategic and operational expertise across various business and functional roles within the company, it said.

In her new role leading operations for the company, Fetch oversees Cummins' New and Recon Parts business and global operating functions, including supply chain, IT, Cummins Services, advanced analytics and quality.

Fetch is a graduate of the University of St. Francis with a bachelor's degree in applied organizational management and completed executive programs at both Stanford University and Singularity University.


Wright

In addition, Shon Wright has been appointed vice president and president of distribution business. Wright has 22 years of diverse experience at Cummins, holding a variety of strategy, purchasing, operations, sales and marketing, and general management roles across Cummins Power Generation, Cummins Filtration and Cummins Turbo Technologies (CTT), as well as CTT's expansion to the Cummins Components and software business.

In his role leading the distribution business, Wright will focus on continuing to deliver excellent sales and service support for Cummins' global markets, investing in employee development and advancing operational performance. His strategic and business acumen, combined with his commitment to excellence and people-centered leadership, will contribute to the continued growth and success of the distribution business.

Wright is a graduate of the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering, and he received a Master of Business Administration from Harvard Business School.

Blue Compass, Make-A-Wish Partnership Delivers Jayco Trailer

Blue Compass RV and Make-A-Wish Middle Tennessee partnered up to grant the ultimate outdoor experience for one lucky deserving Wish child in Tennessee.

After showing up to the Blue Compass RV Nashville location, Kelsey, alongside her family, were excited to take delivery of a new 2025 Jayco Jay Flight SLX Travel Trailer. Looking to hit the road and explore with her family, Kelsey's new RV is ideal for easy access to outdoor adventure while providing the comfort and amenities one would need to feel close to home.

Blue Compass RV said it is proud to lean into its philanthropic efforts in 2025 by partnering with like-minded organizations to help those in need. Blue Compass RV has sold over 200,000 RVs in its six-year history, becoming the fastest RV company to ever hit that mark, a proud milestone for the Blue Compass RV team. The 2025 Jayco Jay Flight SLX Travel Trailer was donated by Blue Compass RV, in partnership with Jayco.

"Giving back is a huge part of who we are at Blue Compass RV, and we are excited to team up with the Make-A-Wish Middle Tennessee chapter and Jayco to help grant these wishes for children and families who need it most," said Jon Ferrando, founder, CEO and president of Blue Compass RV. "RVs are a perfect way for families to spend time together, travel seamlessly and create lasting memories, and we are excited to continue fulfilling these wishes in the future."

Make-A-Wish Middle Tennessee was founded in 2000 as a chapter of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America. The organization grants life-changing wishes to children with critical illnesses, like Kelsey.

"Because of the generosity of Blue Compass RV and Jayco, Kelsey's wish to explore the outdoors with her family is coming true," said Beth Torres, president and CEO of Make-A-Wish Middle Tennessee. "This generous gift will bring Kelsey and her family many joyous experiences and memories for years to come. We are so grateful for partners, like Blue Compass RV and Jayco, who support the life-changing work of Make-A-Wish."

Canadian Association Celebrates 50 Years With Care Camps Donation

The Canadian Recreational Vehicle Association (CRVA) marked its 50th anniversary in 2025, celebrating five decades of advocacy, innovation and dedication to the Canadian RV industry.

CRVA was formed in 1975 by a group of dedicated industry leaders who recognized the need for a unified voice to represent Canadian RV manufacturers and suppliers.

In its early years, the association focused on establishing quality standards, advocating for fair industry regulation and fostering collaboration between manufacturers and dealers.

As the RV industry grew, so did CRVA's role, expanding its efforts to include consumer education, government advocacy and strategic partnerships that would strengthen and promote the RV lifestyle across Canada.

In 1997, the CRVA and the RVDA of Canada established Go RVing Canada, a national marketing initiative created to promote the RV lifestyle and inspire more Canadians to explore the freedom of RV travel.

In 2013, CRVA, along with RVDA of Canada and several Provincial Campground Owners Associations across the country, worked to establish the Canadian Camping and RV Association (formerly Canadian Camping and RV Council) to help foster stronger collaboration between RV manufacturers, dealers and campgrounds, further supporting the growth of Canada's outdoor hospitality industry.

To help celebrate CRVA's 50th anniversary in a truly meaningful way, General Coach Canada, a longtime CRVA member, generously donated a brand-new 2025 25-foot Citation Reward Travel Trailer. This gift will not only be used to mark CRVA's 50th-year milestone but will also provide the association an opportunity to give back to the broader community.

CRVA's board of directors came together in a decision to wrap the RV in a custom design and use it as a platform to support a cause close to their hearts — Care Camps, a charitable organization that provides children with cancer the opportunity to experience the healing power of the outdoors by funding specialized oncology camps across North America.

The RV will showcase a QR code on its exterior sides, directing potential donors to a landing page on Care Camp's website, a portal for selling raffle tickets to win the RV and facilitate corporate sponsorships.

The Canadian Recreational Vehicle Association has assured the charity that 100% of the proceeds will go directly to Care Camps for the entire year-long fundraising period. RVP

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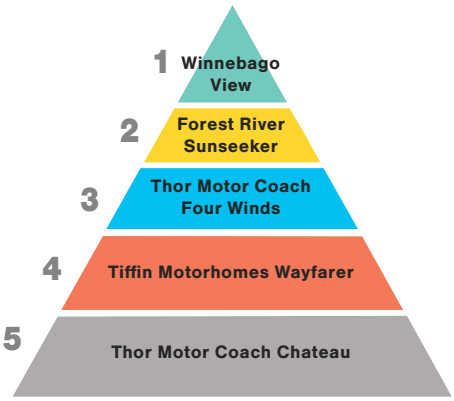


Top Class C Makes in 2024

1. Thor Motor Coach
2. Winnebago
3. Jayco
4. Coachmen
5. Forest River

Since 2022, Thor Motor Coach and Winnebago have topped the list of the most popular Class C brands on RV Trader, maintaining their respective first and second positions in 2024. Year-over-year, Jayco overtook Coachmen for the third spot, while Forest River rounded out the top five.

Top Class C Models in 2024



Similar to the top five most popular manufacturers of last year, the top five Class C models of 2024 saw little change year over year. Winnebago's View maintained the highest ranking, while the Forest River Sunseeker overtook Thor Motor Coach Four Winds for second place.

"With similar year-over-year rankings for Class C makes and models, it's clear that buyers have identified the rigs that meet their needs, and that those needs have remained largely unchanged. The most common features across the top five Class C models include spacious interiors, multiple floorplan options and ample storage capacity. Whether it's the user-friendliness of the Sunseeker, the value of the Four Winds or the high-end finishes of the View, dealers should highlight how their Class C models provide the versatile, family-friendly experience of larger rigs without the driving and parking challenges that often accompany them."

New vs. Used Class Cs

RV Trader saw a slight growth in the share of used Class C listings in 2024, up four percentage points from 2023. Search volume was divided 46% to 54% between new and used listings.

Most Popular Class C Lengths

The following are 2024's most popular lengths (in feet) for Class Cs on RV Trader.



1. 25 feet
2. 24 feet
3. 32 feet
4. 31 feet
5. 30 feet

Top Sleeping Capacities for Class Cs

In 2024, consumers were interested in Class Cs that sleep three to eight people, with rigs that accommodate four capturing the most interest.

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

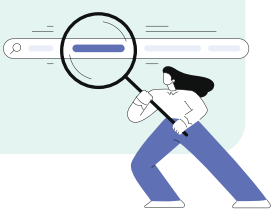
About RV Trader

RV Trader, a part of the "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.

Keyword Searches on RV Trader

Consumers who searched for Class C RVs on RV Trader refined their searches with the following keywords:

1. *"Super C"*
2. *"4x4"*
3. *"Diesel"*
4. *"Toy hauler"*
5. *"24 ft"*



**SOURCE: RV TRADER SEARCH ACTIVITY FOR CLASS Cs FROM JANUARY – DECEMBER 2024.


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A DEALER'S NEW DAWN

Quality products, competitive pricing and excellent service have brought this second-generation dealership success for over 50 years.

BY JORDAN BENSCHOP, RV PRO SENIOR MANAGING EDITOR

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIDWAY RV CENTER



Team Midway RV after receiving the 2024 Newmar Diamond Service Award

From the Apollo 11 moon landing and the Woodstock music festival to the Beatles' final performance and the first message sent over the internet, 1969 was a pivotal year in modern history. And while these iconic moments were defining cultural movements across the globe, for two businessmen in Michigan, the year was just as seminal on a local scale.

That's when Midway Trailer Sales staked its claim on the north side of Grand Rapids, where the two entrepreneurs bought a U-Haul rental company with a handful of travel trailers in stock. Soon after, their partnership with a local RV expert, Roger Naber, became the key to success of what is known today as Midway RV Center. Having worked at a dealership in the area, Naber was sought after to run the shop-to-be. But before he could be its majority owner, his first task was to move it.

"At that time, there were several RV dealers along South Division Avenue in Grand Rapids, so that was one of the prerequisites if [Naber] were to partner and run the dealership — it needed to relocate," says Dave Ballast, sales manager at Midway RV Center.

Newly stationed among other established dealers, Naber and Midway hit the ground running with travel trailers and fold-down campers. In 1978, the business outgrew its first location and moved to its current spot.

"Motorhomes were added to the inventory, and Midway immediately had





Right: Midway RV salesman Kyle Walcott was honored posthumously at RV PRO's 40 Under 40 event in 2024. The award was accepted by wife Colleen Walcott (middle), Marketing Manager Karli Franken (left) and Dave Ballast, sales

great success with motorized units. That was an early indication of where things were headed," Ballast says. Since the late 80s, even with a few years of travel trailers sprinkled in, motorhomes became an exclusive selling point, especially in its last five years.

"There have been several updates and two major expansions since then. January 2000 added six more service bays, and in October 2018, 10 more were added," he says. The shop now boasts 20 bays used for detailing, prep and orientation, along with service and warranty work. Its technicians average 20 years of RV experience each, he adds.

Midway is now in its second generation of ownership. Naber retired in 2001, and his son, Mike Naber, took the reins. With all three of Mike Naber's children working at the dealership — two daughters and a son — the Naber family legacy is firmly entrenched at Midway RV.

"I myself started here washing RVs at 17 years old, back in the fall of 1984. It really doesn't seem like 40 years have passed," Ballast adds. Of the 22 full-time employees currently at the dealership, half became staffers as teenagers and moved into different roles, from service and sales staff to management.

Ballast considers Midway RV's roster as something that sets it apart from other shops in the area. Its history of long-term employees (referred to as "lifers," he says) share the same goals and values, keeping seasoned experts in the mix from back to front and reducing turnover by an impressive amount.

"As an indicator, if you have only been employed at Midway RV for 10 years, you are in the lower half of seniority (and might



Midway RV display at a Newmar event at Hearthside Grove RV Resort in 2024.



Midway RV's sales team ready for action at the 2025 Grand Rapids RV Show.



Midway's Nomad travel trailer on the lot in the early 1970s.

still be considered a 'newbie')," Ballast says. "Retaining like-minded and committed employees has been a very important part of Midway RV's continued success — now in its 56th year."

Circling back to its bread and butter, Ballast adds that another aspect setting the dealership apart is its focus on high-end motorhomes — specifically Class As, Super Cs and diesel pushers. Midway RV intentionally limits its brand offerings to OEMs it has a strong confidence in — one of those being the Newmar lineup.

"We've been selling Newmar motorhomes now for over 33 years. We have consistently won its highest service award as a Diamond Dealer and are consistently a Top 10 in Sales dealership for them."

The shop also carries smaller Class B and B+ units and has been a Pleasure Way partner for over 15 years.

"Those two manufactures have been our main fixtures for the last several years. They both match with our dealership so well — high-quality products and high-quality people behind them," Ballast says of Newmar and Pleasure Way.

Midway's other specialty includes pre-owned models. The shop frequently takes trade-ins for its new sales, and with a top-shelf detailing and prep department, Ballast says it can often find nice units for those with a smaller budget.

"It often takes a good amount of time, energy and money to bring pre-owned units to market, but in the end, it gives us a large customer base to grow from. The pre-owned buyer today may very well be ordering their new Dutch Star three years from now."

THE FUTURE IS RIGHT-SIZED

A trend Ballast has seen in recent RV purchases centers around one notion — "Know your stuff." Whether it's sales or service, today's customers have more access to information than ever before and can spot a "fake" easily.

"It's not always easy to keep up with the ever-changing technology offered in higher-end RVs, but we have some of the best [people] that know these products inside and out," he says. "Along with that knowledge, they all treat our customers with honesty and integrity."

What customers really want is for salespeople to nix the games with hidden charges and mystery fees — which has unfortunately been normalized in the industry, he says.

In addition to keeping up with evolving RV tech, customers are increasingly researching online.

"Of course, today, many of our customer contacts start with an electronic contact (email, text, etc.) as opposed to driving to our dealership and walking in the showroom. And yet, ironically, most still want the same experience they always have: Quality product, good competitive pricing and excellent service during and after the sale. We always try to hit those marks," Ballast adds.

Customer feedback has always been a tool for Midway RV's continuous improvement. One example of this was the dealership's decision to enhance its pre-delivery inspection (PDI) and customer orientation process — when a buyer picks up their coach.

"About 10 years ago, we made the commitment to really up our PDI game. We spend a lot of time and dollars making sure units are right before they go out the door. Our customer orientations last hours — sometimes even multiple days," he says. The company's focus on raising the bar in these areas gained positive feedback, only reenforcing its decision and "literally pushed us to take it even further," he adds.

Looking ahead, while Midway RV has considered expanding in the past, its current growth strategy lies in "staying with who we are," Ballast says — providing the best possible service and products to its customers.

"We like to think of ourselves as either a big-small dealership, or a small-big dealership." He laughs. "We are big enough to compete with the mega dealers and small enough to offer a level of service that mega stores just can't match."

At the heart of Midway's success is a commitment to helping families and individuals create lasting memories on the road. When asked what Ballast considers the most rewarding part of working in the RV industry, he says, "Just seeing the enjoyment that people get from their RV travels — from young families just starting out and enjoying time away, all the way to the retiree who has been saving up for a year to RV travel and oftentimes has a 'snowbird' lifestyle. With so many repeat customers, these aren't just clients — they've become our friends." RVP

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The Road to Stardom



Newmar's Grand Star looks to capture first-time Super C buyers with family-friendly floorplans.

BY JOHN MCCURRY

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NEWMAR





Newmar's Grand Star Class Super C, which has drawn rave reviews since its premiere last fall, fills a void in the Nappanee, Indiana, manufacturer's lineup. For Newmar, it was a matter of breaking new ground in coach construction.

"What we wanted to do was really capture the first-time Super C buyer," recalls Matt Ellinger, Newmar's vice president of sales. "To do that, we knew we needed to build on the S2RV chassis. We had two units in the marketplace in the Super Star and the Supreme Aire, at price points that probably were not competing with some of the other coaches that were in the S2RV chassis level. We saw there was a section of the market that we were missing out on."

Ellinger describes Grand Star as affordable luxury at 34 feet. The new model's MSRP starts at $364,230.

"We realized we could capitalize on those people trading up into a new market, but we had never built on it before, so that was the idea. For us, this gets us into a price point that mirrors more of our introductory gas line, but gives you the torque and power of a diesel in the Super C line."

GIVING THEM WHAT THEY WANT

Introduced as a very early 2026 model, Grand Star debuted at the Elkhart Open House last September and was an eye-opener for dealers, who responded favorably.

"We had dealers come in and say this was what they have been lacking," Ellinger says. "Some of our dealers, who are exclusive Newmar and do not sell other brands, were really excited for us to have this coming to the market."

Ellinger says dealers who had not offered Newmar's Super Star or Supreme Aire coaches on their lots, due to the higher price points, were excited about getting involved with the new S2RV with Newmar.

"We can really win with some of the floorplans that are on there. The dealers called it a home run right from the beginning.



They also gave us some feedback on things we might want to offer as an option, or tweaks that we could make," he says. "That is the beauty of coming out with these models before you release them to the public. We actually instituted some of the



suggestions the dealers had. It was about 97% complete, and the dealers helped us finish it. That is beneficial to the customers in the long run."

An example of a dealer suggestion Newmar incorporated into Grand Star involved the flooring.

"We knew we were going to go with a tile floor, rather than vinyl, and the dealers said, how about a hydronic floor heating system, like what we have done in our diesel line? We ended up doing it," Ellinger says. "They also let us know that customers have asked for an all-electric version and asked if we would ever offer that. And so, now we do."

Newmar has 48 dealers in its network, with some having multiple locations, bringing the total number of outlets to 78. Ellinger says the majority will be adding the Grand Star, which he perceives as a great compliment.

STANDING OUT IN A CROWD

Newmar introduced the Grand Star to the RVing public in January at the Florida RV Super Show in Tampa, Florida. That was just after the company began shipping units to dealers.

"The feedback that I heard was that they loved the fit and finish on the inside of that coach," Ellinger says. "They enjoyed the two-toned cabinetry that was showcased. They also really liked the 3444 floorplan full wall slide, which gives the impression of that coach being 36 or 37 feet [while] still being under 35 in length."

A few Tampa customers liked the size and layout of the new model so much they decided at the show to trade down from a competitor's 45-foot diesel into a 34-foot Grand Star. Ellinger says Grand Star is "unique in the marketplace."

In developing the Grand Star, Newmar focused on the differentiators between it and other coaches built on the same chassis, which Ellinger describes as Newmar staples.

"We have a coach built with Amish Heritage woodwork on the inside, and we put top name brands, such as Bose sound bars with Sony televisions, into the coach," he says. "The other thing we really focused on, that I think sets Newmar apart, is having a 34-foot motorhome with a full wall slide, king-size bed, and separate washer and dryer, not a combo. It is something we recognized that the market had not seen."

Several sleeping arrangements are available, depending on how one options the coach. One option involves Newmar's first foray into an overhead cab sleeping area. Understanding families would be primary users of Grand Star, Newmar put its engineering team to work.

"It required a lot of special engineering and tooling," Ellinger says. "Our engineers worked overtime and did a fantastic job of putting this together in a short period of time. They delivered for us."

The overhead bunk sleeps two, a couch sleeps one or two and the king bed sleeps two, plus the bunk bed, for a total of seven or eight.

Grand Star comes in three floorplans: the 34-footer and two 39-footers, one with a bath and a half and then the 39-footer with a bunk bed.

Grand Star's target market is "everyone," Ellinger says. This includes someone trading down from a larger coach and first-time buyers who consider a Super C to be more comfortable to drive than a Class A.

Popular options for Grand Star, according to Ellinger, include an all-electric unit with an induction cooktop. This can come with 960 amp-hours of battery power, enabling users to dry camp for extended periods. Included are 3,000-watt inverters offering hydronic heat, so no propane is used. Other in-demand options are a central vacuum system and a dishwasher. Also, an Onyx exterior package, which replaces standard chrome details in a blacked-out scheme, is available for preorder.

A SMOOTH RIDE ON THE HORIZON

Newmar has a long-time partnership with Freightliner Custom Chassis Corporation for all of the motorcoaches it builds.

"We certainly buy more Class A chassis than Class C chassis, currently. We always enjoy what they have to offer, both from an innovation standpoint and from a service standpoint," Ellinger says. "Any time there may be an issue with the coach from the chassis side, we feel that Freightliner is really on top of things."

Other suppliers include River Park for audiovisual equipment inside the coach, BASF for exterior paint and Lithionics for lithium batteries.

"Lithionics is our lithium battery provider, and they do a great job of making sure that the systems talk to each other inside the coach," Ellinger says.

Newmar's success has been buoyed by a high degree of customer loyalty.

"When we are out talking to retail customers, we see a lot of people who like to stick with the family, but at the same time, welcome new entrants. This introduction of the Grand Star could bring a lot more people into the Newmar family."

Ellinger is optimistic about the overall Super C market in 2025 and beyond.

"They have been strong pre-COVID and post-COVID, when you look at the number that have been sold," he says. "For Newmar to get into a new segment of the Super C, we are super happy with it. We believe the market is getting younger and more diverse, and if we can tailor our products, the way we have done with the Onyx package, with the smaller coach and with the bunk bed version, there is a lot of runway with the Super C." RVP

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Different by Design

Dynamax's Isata 3 combines big features in a smaller Class C, capitalizing on its positive reputation within a competitive market segment.

BY MAURA KELLER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DYNAMAX

When it comes to RV owners, one thing's for sure: They consistently seek motorhomes that offer state-of-the-art design, functionality and upgraded features that bring the RV experience to the next level. For 28 years, Dynamax RV, a Forest River brand, has been working to redefine the road trip experience with unparalleled craftsmanship and innovation. Dynamax prides itself on crafting journeys, it says — delivering performance, style and reliability in every mile.

At the heart of the company's lineup are its Class C motorhomes, built for power, durability and comfort.

"But we don't stop there — our commitment to excellence extends to our smaller Mercedes Sprinter-based models in the Isata 3 Series lineup, ensuring the same premium quality in a more compact form," says Tony Anagnos, national sales manager at Dynamax. "No matter the size, every Dynamax RV embodies the same attention to detail, superior construction and refined design."

The inspiration behind the Isata 3 Series was simple: Combine the best features of the larger Dynamax models with the efficiency and maneuverability of a small coach. Dynamax saw a growing demand for motorhomes that could easily navigate tight city streets, winding mountain roads and off-the-beaten-path destinations without sacrificing the higher-end features and durability that define its brand.

So, what makes the Isata 3 stand out in the marketplace? As Anagnos explains, the Isata 3 isn't just another Class C motorhome on a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis.



Tony Anagnos, national sales manager



"It is a Dynamax — and that means premium craftsmanship, superior construction and attention to detail that sets us apart from the competition," Anagnos says. "While many manufacturers build on the Sprinter chassis, we stand out in three key areas: quality, practicality and value. Our design features cater to the camper and are tested in our prototypes by our staff prior to introducing them to the masses. There is a purpose behind each decision and feature of the Isata 3, which is ultimately to have the best camping experience possible."

Thanks to Dynamax's reputation among RV aficionados, the Isata 3 is faring well in the marketplace, consistently receiving positive reviews for its quality, design and functionality.

"Our dealer base is very proud of the Isata 3, and it shows with consistent sales year over year," Anagnos says. That says a lot in the ever-evolving Class C RV market, where some of the biggest trends are enticing consumers to explore new amenities and options gracing today's Class C RVs. Quite simply, consumers' increasing interest in this product segment is keeping today's







motorhome manufacturers invested in staying on top of the trends to meet the interest level of today's RV consumers.

In fact, the biggest trends the Dynamax team is seeing in regard to the Class C market segment is that consumers are seeking more off-the-grid capabilities, including enhanced solar and lithium batteries. As Anagnos explains, these are features the company incorporated before the pandemic as they saw those trends beginning to emerge.

"Now, we are dialing in better packages to suit our customers' needs, including the Isata 3 Freedom Edition," Anagnos says. The Freedom Edition does not have a generator or propane and instead runs off a large battery, inverter and solar system with a secondary auxiliary alternator to charge the batteries. Specifically, the Isata 3 Freedom Edition includes two lithium-ion batteries that can be charged quickly from multiple sources of the Freedom eGEN system, including a solar panel system, a dedicated alternator or through shore power if plugged in. From a design perspective, the Isata 3 Freedom Edition also includes new paint schemes, dual pane acrylic windows and wider cab chassis. Users can also monitor the power consumption, battery status and other system-related information through the Xantrex Bluetooth app on a mobile device.

"This system continues to be a great seller for us as it suits many of our customer's needs," Anagnos says.

Of course, in the competitive world of the Class C Sprinter, there are many choices. One of the things that sets Dynamax apart is the company's focus on exceptional customer service, as is evident by its customer interaction and involvement.

"Our whole team has bought into this concept, and it starts with the top down," Anagnos says. "Our general manager, Brian Clemens, national sales manager and our sales representatives are very active on various Facebook groups, the Forest River Forums and other social media platforms."

By being a transparent division, the Dynamax teams recognize that they can connect better with customers and prospective buyers, while keeping their finger on the proverbial pulse of the marketplace — truly understanding what customers want and what the company may need to improve upon.

"If there are any service or warranty questions, our team can address them as soon as possible and oftentimes help a customer before they even need to reach out to a dealer," Anagnos says. "We are also able to make necessary design changes on the fly if a customer has an innovative idea or common concern. This attitude of being customer-driven is prevalent throughout the entire company and is reflected by our recent achievement of being awarded the [RV Dealers Association's] Quality Circle Award."

FULL SPEED AHEAD

While the Dynamax team continually strives to incorporate the latest technology and trends that consumers are seeking in today's RVs, they also focus on what the future may look like for the Class C RV market. As Anagnos points out, this segment of the market continues to be the largest segment of motorized RVs sold across North America.

"With consumers continuing to work remotely and with the combination of technology and convenience, RVing will continue to become even more accessible, enjoyable and adventurous," Anagnos says. "Dynamax RV is known for being 'Different by Design,' and this philosophy drives everything we do. From the aesthetic appeal of the motorhome to the practical functionality of each floorplan, we strive to be authentically different from the design room to the campground. We take pride in creating unique designs that stand out.

"Many customers talk about our paint designs, and they are just not about looks — they are a testament to the company's commitment to quality craftsmanship and eye for detail. We will also continue to listen to our customers' feedback and those ideas shape how we incorporate cutting-edge ideas into our designs."

As the RV market continues to evolve, Dynamax says it is fortunate to have a brand that is celebrated for its quality and innovation. By building on a variety of chassis, the company can offer many different options for a customer's camping style and preferences.

"This allows current customers to often stay with the Dynamax brand when they purchase their new RV," Anagnos says. "As the market changes, Dynamax can still cater to the majority of Class C buyers' needs." RVP

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Meeting the Needs of Full-Time RVers

A full-time RVing couple offers a manufacturer's guide to winning the market — and what dealers need to know, too.

BY SCOTT & VANESSA RUSSELL



The Russells have been full-time RVers since 2015. *Photo courtesy of Scott & Vanessa Russell.*

As RV living continues to rise in popularity, manufacturers are competing to capture the attention of this growing customer base. Full-time RVers have unique needs compared to weekend and vacation travelers, as their RVs serve as a primary residence and must withstand the rigors of daily use. In this article, we will explore how RV manufacturers can better meet the needs of this customer demographic to win their business.

FULL-TIME RVERS' REQUIREMENTS VS. VACATION TRAVELERS

Our family recently began our 10th year of full-time traveling. During this time, we have purchased two new RVs from different manufacturers, and we are currently in the market for our third full-time RV. Despite the increasing popularity of RV living, manufacturers have been slow to catch up with customer demand. Many full-time travelers are looking for similar RV features/services, but they can be challenging to find. Here are some considerations to help your brand stand out — or from the dealership perspective, how to know what to stock — for attracting RV living customers.

MANUFACTURER WARRANTY TO INCLUDE MOBILE REPAIR

One of the most significant pain points for full-time RVers is RV repairs. When your RV is your home, you can't afford to drop it off at an authorized dealer and hope for a quick resolution. Full-time RVers are often left without a place to stay during repairs, and dealership service departments are frequently overburdened. Inadequate service departments lead to long wait times and customer dissatisfaction.

We have experienced hotel stays as long as two weeks while waiting for our RV to be repaired. Covering mobile repair services within the RV manufacturer warranty allows RVers to stay in their home while most repairs are handled. In our experience, mobile repair is fast, efficient and minimizes trip disruptions. Allowing the coverage of mobile repair service within the manufacturer warranty increases customer satisfaction while helping reduce the repair burden on dealership partners' service departments.

RATED FOR FULL-TIME RV LIVING DESIGNATION

An RV designed for daily use needs more than just living-friendly features. It also must be built for longevity. Given the wear and tear RVs experience on the road, manufacturers should consider adding features that enhance durability before labeling an RV as rated for full-time use. Examples include an upgraded suspension, quality tires, a shock-reducing pin box and a lifetime roof. Features that reduce wear and tear will keep residential units rolling smoothly down the road.

INCREASE FACTORY ADD-ON FEATURES

RVers want to hit the road and start enjoying their adventures without the hassle of figuring out who to hire for RV upgrades. Many common RV upgrades sought by full-time RVers could be offered as factory-installed packages. Coveted features for

RV living include full solar power systems, lifetime roofs, disc brakes, washing machines and dishwashers.

Full-body paint increases the longevity of an RV's appearance and is another highly requested add-on by full-time RVers. Light and bright interior designs, such as white and gray cabinetry and walls, are also popular, as many buyers end up remodeling RVs to eliminate dark cabinets and an abundance of brown and beige. By offering these coveted RV features from the factory, your brand will be positioned as a top choice among RV living buyers.



Nexus's Rebel 4x4 Super C offers a family-friendly bunk bed floorplan. *Photo courtesy of Nexus.*

CARGO CARRYING CAPACITY

When an RV serves as a house on wheels, full-time RVers will have more belongings on board than casual RV travelers. We have noticed a popular trend in towable RV floorplans with increased storage space but not increased cargo-carrying capacity. While larger storage areas are exciting, they're not beneficial for buyers if using them creates an overweight RV.

COMPACT MODELS FOR FULL-TIME LIVING

A common misconception within the RV industry is that full-time RVers only seek big rigs. While the majority are looking for maximum living space, there is a growing trend toward downsizing to make more camping locations accessible. An exciting industry opportunity exists for new compact units rated for full-time use.

OFF-ROAD CAPABILITIES

RV living offers travelers the ultimate freedom to go wherever they like, limited only by their RV's capabilities. As campground availability and higher prices remain problematic for all RVers, full-timers often seek new camping locations and options, including boondocking and off-road camping. It's surprising how few four-wheel drive motorhomes exist in the RV market. Nexus makes a 4x4 Super C model with quality features suitable for RV living, including a bunk model. The Jayco Seneca XT and the similar Entegra Accolade XT are great 4x4 off-road capable options, but neither offers a bunk model yet for families living on the road.

There is a significant opportunity for manufacturers to offer go-anywhere, family-friendly 4x4 models with RV living features within this class. Even models that aren't four-wheel drive can improve their off-road capabilities by upgrading the suspension with helper springs products like Timbren, increasing ground clearance and adding off-road tires.



Brinkley made the L-shaped sofa standard in its Model G 3950 after receiving customer feedback. *Photo courtesy of Brinkley.*

CONSULT RVERS FOR DESIGN IDEAS

No one knows RVs and what RVers want better than full-time RV travelers. They have the road experience you're looking for and can be a driving force for creating something special that distinguishes your brand from competitors. Customer feedback is invaluable.

An example of a manufacturer taking notice of RVer feedback is Brinkley RV, which is becoming known for implementing changes quickly, rather than waiting for the next model year. We toured the launch of Brinkley's new toy hauler, the Model G 3950, which featured a unique modular U-shaped couch. The immediate feedback from customers was that an L-shaped couch is preferred. Brinkley responded within months by making the modular couch shape a buyer option.

In addition to regularly gathering and implementing customer feedback, consider partnering with a full-time RV influencer to help design and promote a special edition RV. Content creators with large RV audiences already hold the market customer base that manufacturers seek. This approach generates an attention-grabbing marketing buzz while attracting new customers to your brand.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON ATTRACTING FULL-TIME RVERS

RV manufacturers have the opportunity to position their brand as a standout among full-time RVers, and dealerships have the opportunity to capture buyers' attention by taking into consideration what full-timers are in market for. By addressing the specific needs and concerns of this growing customer base, manufacturers and dealers can create or offer RVs that are not only comfortable and functional for daily living but also built to withstand the rigors of full-time travel. By implementing the considerations discussed in this article, RV manufacturers and dealers can attract and retain loyal customers within the full-time RVing community, leading to increased sales and brand recognition in this competitive market. RVP

Scott & Vanessa Russell have RV traveled full-time with their daughter since 2015. They work from the road as RV industry marketing consultants, writers for magazines and websites, social media ad creators/influencers, television contributors for RVing Today and product/lifestyle photographers. Contact the Russells at scott@theadventuredetour.com, on their blog theadventuredetour.com or on Instagram @theadventuredetour.

Mastering the Art of RV Towing

A GUIDE FOR TECHNICIANS

Tips for ensuring safe towing as well as addressing customer concerns and common issues.

BY BILL STEWART, RV TECHNICAL INSTITUTE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RV TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

Towing an RV is more than just hitching up and hitting the road. It's a complex interplay of weights, equipment and driving conditions, and RV technicians play a crucial role in ensuring customer safety and peace of mind. This article delves into the essential knowledge RV technicians need regarding towing and hitches, addressing common customer concerns, prevalent issues and the top five key takeaways for safe and successful RV towing.

The Foundation of Safe Towing: Understanding Weights & Equipment

Successful towing hinges on a thorough understanding of the weights and capacities of all involved components — the tow vehicle, the trailer and the hitching equipment. Technicians must be well-versed in these specifications to guide customers effectively. This includes understanding gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), gross combined weight rating (GCWR), tongue weight and payload capacity. Explaining these concepts clearly to customers is paramount. Furthermore, technicians need to be familiar with the various types of hitches, their weight ratings and their compatibility with different tow vehicles and trailers. This knowledge is the bedrock of safe towing practices.

The Perils of Trailer Sway: A Technician's Guide to Prevention

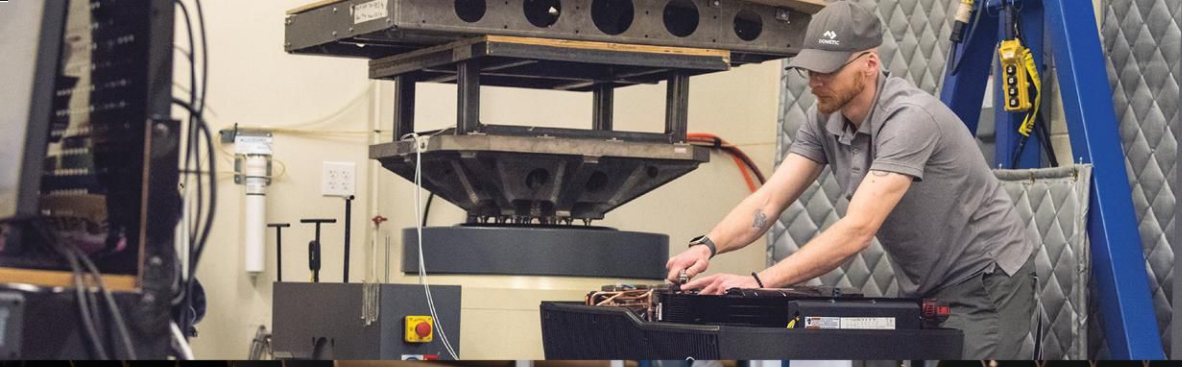
Trailer sway, also known as "fishtailing," is a dangerous phenomenon that can quickly lead to loss of control. Technicians should be experts in identifying the causes of sway and advising customers on preventative measures. Several factors contribute to trailer sway:

- **Wind:** Gusts of wind, especially crosswinds and the "bow wave" from passing trucks, can exert significant force on the trailer, initiating sway.

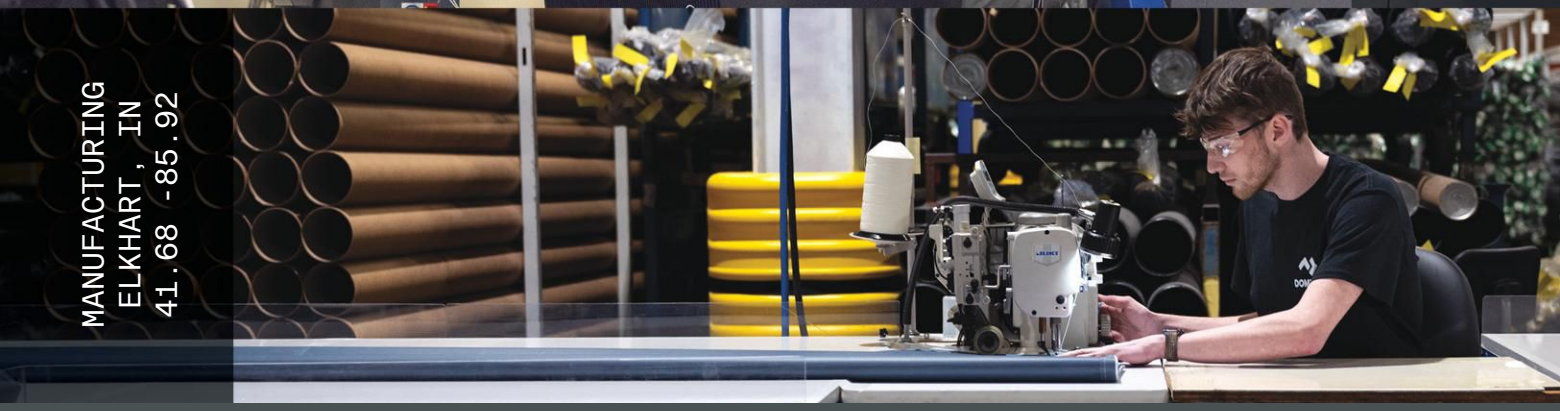


Bill Stewart, lead instructor at RVTI, has over 35 years of experience.





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- **Uneven Road Conditions:** Bumpy roads, potholes and construction zones can exacerbate trailer movement and make sway more likely.
- **Poor Driving Conditions:** Rain, snow and ice reduce traction and increase the risk of sway. Hydroplaning can be a significant concern.
- **Improper Weight Distribution:** Uneven loading, with too much weight at the rear of the trailer, is a primary cause of sway. The tongue weight should ideally be 10% to 15% of the total trailer weight.
- **Overloading:** Exceeding the weight ratings of the tow vehicle or trailer puts undue stress on the equipment and significantly increases the risk of sway.

Technician's Toolkit: Addressing Customer Concerns & Common Issues

RV technicians are often the first point of contact for customers with towing-related questions and problems. Here are some common issues technicians encounter and how to address them:

- **"My trailer sways — what can I do?"** This is a frequent complaint. Technicians should first assess the customer's setup, checking weight distribution, hitch type and tire pressures. They should then explain the causes of sway and recommend solutions, such as a weight distribution hitch with sway control, adjustments to loading or upgrading tires.
- **"What kind of hitch do I need?"** Technicians should guide customers through the selection process, considering the weight of the trailer, the tow vehicle's capabilities and the type of towing they plan to do. They should explain the differences between weight-carrying and weight-distributing hitches.
- **"How do I know if my trailer is loaded correctly?"** Technicians should educate customers on the importance of proper weight distribution and demonstrate how to calculate tongue weight. They can also recommend tools like tongue weight scales.
- **"My lights aren't working."** Trailer lights are essential for safety. Technicians should be able to diagnose and repair trailer wiring issues, including checking connections, fuses and bulbs.
- **"My brakes aren't working."** Trailer brakes are crucial for stopping safely. Technicians should be knowledgeable about different types of trailer brakes (electric, surge) and be able to diagnose and repair brake malfunctions.

Top 5 Things RV Technicians Need To Know About Towing & Hitches:

1. **Weight Ratings Are Paramount:** Understanding and adhering to weight ratings is the cornerstone of safe towing. Technicians must be able to explain these ratings to customers and help them determine the appropriate setup for their needs.
2. **Weight Distribution Is Key:** Proper weight distribution is critical for preventing trailer sway and ensuring a stable towing experience. Technicians should be proficient in setting up and adjusting weight distribution hitches.
3. **Sway Control Is Essential:** Sway control devices, integrated into weight distribution hitches or as separate components, significantly enhance towing safety. Technicians should be familiar with the different types of sway control systems and their benefits.
4. **Hitch Selection Matters:** Choosing the right hitch is crucial for compatibility and safety. Technicians should be able to recommend the appropriate hitch type and class based on the customer's towing needs.
5. **Regular Maintenance Is a Must:** Regularly inspecting and maintaining towing equipment is essential for preventing problems. Technicians should advise customers on maintenance schedules and perform thorough inspections during service appointments.

Beyond the Basics: Continuous Learning & Customer Education

The world of RV towing is constantly evolving, with new technologies and best practices emerging. Technicians should stay up to date on these developments through industry publications, training programs and certifications. Furthermore, effective communication with customers is paramount. Technicians should be able to explain complex concepts in a clear and concise manner, empowering customers to make informed decisions about their towing setup. By combining technical expertise with excellent customer service, RV technicians can play a vital role in promoting safe and enjoyable RV adventures. RVP

Bill Stewart is the lead instructor at the RV Technical Institute, the only industry-backed RV technician training program. In addition to being a Level 4 Certified RV technician, Stewart holds certifications from Cummins, Grand Design, Heartland, Mercury Marine and ASE automotive and light-duty trucks and has over 35 years of automotive and RV experience.

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Hitching a Ride

Advice for dealers on towing and hitches, and making sure customers leave with the correct hitch for their tow vehicle.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BLUE OX.

BY MICHELE MOORE, RV PRO MANAGING EDITOR

To get some insight on towing and hitches, RV PRO spoke with Alex Walker, director of sales at Blue Ox as well as Scott Stonehill, vice president of operations at PPL Motor Homes, and RV PRO Editorial Advisory Board member Randal Murray, who is director of orientation at Pete's RV Dealer Group.



Alex Walker, director of sales at Blue Ox



Randal Murray, director of orientation at Pete's RV Dealer Group



Scott Stonehill, vice president of operations at PPL Motor Homes

What are the main questions that dealers have about towing & hitches?

Walker: The biggest things are the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) for a trailer and what size of a hitch actually goes with that. So there's two components really. You look at gross weight, which is the maximum amount that that trailer can hold in total weight, and then the second piece that's really important with weight distribution specifically is tongue weight.

The tongue weight can vary based on a lot of different factors. Anything that you load ... in front of the axles of the trailer can contribute to the tongue weight. That could be anything from loading clothes in a front bedroom, carrying water in a front water tank, adding LP tanks, batteries, any other accessories, bike racks on the front. And then anything that's behind the rear axle of the tow vehicle also contributes to that tongue weight. So it's about identifying what the actual tongue weight is of the vehicle and then picking the appropriate size hitch for that tongue weight.

The problem is when they weigh a vehicle, they weigh it as dry weight, [and] the vehicle itself [may not have] any fluids in it. It doesn't have any full LP tanks; it doesn't have any batteries on there. There's nothing loaded inside. So it drastically changes from the time it's dry to the time that it actually goes out on the road.

Are there questions dealers should ask customers to determine how they're going to use their RV that would help them choose the correct tongue weight?

Walker: Absolutely. The No. 1 thing is to identify the [tow] vehicle they're going to be using [and] know what the tow capacities are. Every vehicle's going to have a maximum available weight of towing, and we want to make sure that they're utilizing GVWR on the trailer, not dry weight, so that they know the maximum capacity. The other important thing is to double-check the capacity of the receiver hitch itself and the maximum tongue weight that it could have with weight distribution. There's a tongue weight that can be used just going right onto a ball in that receiver hitch, and then there's a tongue weight that can be used with weight distribution. Confirm essentially what the capacity is of the vehicle that they're going to tow with in order to select an appropriate trailer that can fit within those guidelines.

We have an actual training team that goes around, and we specifically focus on those items — identifying GVWR, identifying the proper tongue weight, using a tongue scale and then knowing the capacities of the tow vehicle itself.

What Dealers Have To Say:

What are the main questions customers bring to you & how do you address them?

Murray: This truly depends on the customer. Customers are sometimes taken aback with the cost. A good weight distributing hitch with built-in sway control can be up toward a thousand dollars. Add a brake controller, and [customers] are spending $1,500 that [they] were not planning on to tow [their] new travel trailer.

We educate and should be letting the customers know early in the process what they will potentially need. We do

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not like surprises. I train our people to talk about the safety aspect of our hitch gear. I also train on how and where sway happens, so we can educate the customer on the dangers that can come from towing if not properly equipped.

Stonehill: The main questions customers bring to PPL are as follows: What is the safest hitch I can buy? Which hitch offers the most benefits? What is the safest hitch with the most benefits at the lowest price? PPL's process, outlined in the answer below, provides insights on how we address these questions.

Do you have any guidance on what dealers most need to know about these products?

Walker: I think understanding the capacities is the biggest thing, and making sure that they appropriately weigh the trailer tongue. There are tongue scales available that can weigh the actual tongue weight. When they come from the manufacturer, like I said, they don't have full LP tanks, they don't have batteries in the front, so that tongue weight is going to change. [Make] sure they scale the tongue of the trailer to identify the appropriate hitch that's needed. Sometimes you try to make a hitch work, but as that load changes, if it's not the appropriate hitch for that specific weight rating, you might not have the best towing experience possible.

What Dealers Have To Say:

What do you think dealers need to know most about these products?

Murray: People selling hitches should know what it feels like to have a trailer sway behind them, so they can relay their experience during the sales process. People selling hitches should know how they work as well — that way they can overcome objections during the selling process. Personally, I will address the moms when I am selling weight distribution, as they are much more in tune with safety than most of the guys out there when it comes to towing. Dealers should also know the tow vehicles on the market, know what works and what doesn't. I also train on "P" or passenger vehicle tires, which 95% of half-ton trucks come with. These tires give a great ride when not towing, so they make sense. When towing with no anti-sway properties, these tires are very susceptible to sway because of the lighter duty sidewall, [and] we talk about that with customers. The Ford F-150 is the most popular selling truck on the market.

Stonehill: First, dealers need to know the towing capability of the customers tow vehicle and the weight ratings of their RV. The year, make, model, engine, transmission and optional equipment on the customer's tow vehicle will impact their towing capability. The hitch must be rated for the weight of the RV, and customers must understand the differences between the RV's unloaded weight and gross vehicle weight.

Once the weight rating of the hitch is determined, the customer will typically have three hitch options to choose from: good, better and best. The good hitch will mainly be the lowest price and be the most difficult to assemble and hitch correctly. Dealers should always offer all options to the customer and explain the reasons that hitches have different price tiers. Typically, it is ease of use and safety that causes the price to be higher as you move up in quality.

What are some of the most misunderstood things that customers face & dealers are having to explain?

Walker: The maximum towing capacity of the tow vehicle — I think that's the biggest misconception. And it's something that's not always readily available. You're going to have to go and look for it. I always encourage dealers and customers alike [to never] push your maximum capacity.

I think the important thing for dealers is making sure that [customers] purchase a unit that can be towed by the vehicle they want to tow it with. And if they have a unit that's larger, they're going to need to go look for a different vehicle that can hold that capacity. Because, just like a lot of things, trucks have changed a lot over the years. They went from being tow-made vehicles to more grocery-getters. There's talk of some manufacturers going to carbon fiber, so they're using lighter materials, which gets better gas mileage. They're putting features on like ride leveling. The faster you drive, the more your vehicle sinks to the ground to make it more aerodynamic. So [you need to understand] the maximum capacities that tow vehicle can have and then any features that are related to it — some of them have factory sway control built in, which activates the rear brakes in individual moments to help try to center a trailer. That stuff is more intended for use of small trailers and boats, for example. Not so much with weight distribution. It's just really understanding what the limitations are of the tow vehicle itself and what its capacities are, and trying to stay within that range to make sure that that vehicle can handle whatever that trailer is.

What Dealers Have To Say:

What are some of the most misunderstood things that customers face & dealers are having to explain?

Murray: Tow vehicle payloads is often a discussion that is not represented properly in the RV world, especially when talking about pulling a fifth wheel. I also think that today's half-ton trucks are overstated when it comes to towing. Just because your truck's drivetrain can tow a crazy amount of weight doesn't mean you should. Some of today's half-ton trucks are stating that they will tow 12,000 and 13,000 pounds. I do not recommend this with a half-ton truck, even if it says it can. Again, people selling hitches and talking about towability should have practical experience in these matters in my opinion.

Stonehill: The most misunderstood perception many customers have is that they can just hook their RV to a ball, with safety chains, and that is all they need. Dealers must explain the function of the weight distribution hitch and how it works. It's crucial for the customer to purchase the correct hitch and have it professionally installed to keep all occupants of the tow vehicle safe.

What can happen if the right hitch isn't used?

Walker: Essentially, you're sacrificing ride quality overall. So if you don't have the appropriate hitch, you're not going to get the right amount of either sway prevention or sway control. And then you're probably not going to get … the maximum amount of weight distribution. So that weight distribution might not work to its maximum effect or distribute the weight properly without the properly sized hitch. So it's going to reduce the purpose of the weight distribution factor. It's also going to reduce your sway control or sway prevention. It's going to affect the ride quality. So you're going to feel more effects in the actual tow vehicle of what the trailer's doing. The ride's not going to be to its maximum comfort for the driver and their family.

Educating [customers] on different products that are available to help with that [is important]. There's suspension products, there's airbags, there's rubber springs, there's different products that can help boost the experience. There's really nothing that you can add to make [a tow vehicle] a higher capacity, but there are products available to help with those types of things. I'll [use a Dodge Ram] as an example. It's got a coil spring suspension instead of a leaf spring suspension, so the back end can bounce and it has a little more give to it. So you might have to adjust the weight distributing hitch a little bit higher on the ball than you normally would to compensate for that. But there's also different products available to help augment suspension on these types of vehicles. [Dealers need to know] what kind of add-on products are available to make that vehicle more tow ready.

They [also] need to know what the capacities are because there are some vehicles that have what's called a unibody chassis that you're not supposed to use weight distribution with. So it's just doing the research on the vehicle itself and the towing capacities and components to make

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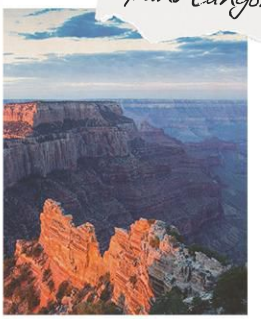
Dear Diary,

The drive through the desert today was magical. The sun dipped low on the horizon, painting the towering red rock formations in deep oranges and golds. Each turn revealed a new masterpiece, a reminder of nature's timeless beauty and the power of solitude.

Today's highlight: Stopping for delicious Sonoran cuisine takeout and enjoying the meal in our cozy dining area, featuring supple Attesa faux leather.

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Grand Canyon



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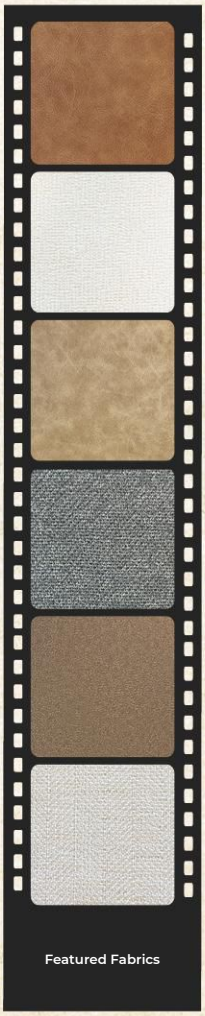






Sonoran Desert





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sure that [customers] have everything that they would need in order to tow [their RV].

What Dealers Have To Say:

What can happen if a travel trailer isn't hitched properly?

Murray: When trailers are not set up or "hitched" properly, they can be dangerous, especially at highway speeds as that is when sway typically happens. Speed, wind, inertia, other vehicles, flat plane, compounded can lead to sway conditions when highway traveling. With all the new people towing on the roads today, it's imperative we do the best job we can when it comes to educating about safe towing.

Stonehill: If your hitch and trailer are not hitched properly, it could create an unsafe towing situation and cause [customers] to lose control while towing the RV. It is very important that [customers] have the hitch height correct and weight distribution connected properly.

Is there anything else you come across that's challenging for dealers when you do training with them on your products?

Walker: I think the biggest thing is keeping people educated as they get new employees — new technicians, new parts and sales service people — and making sure that everybody's trained on the products, so not just the technician knows how to install it, but the salespeople understand the features and benefits for the customer. The parts people understand the SKU list that they need, also the features and benefits, and service understands how to check those products and confirm that they've got the right unit.

So I wouldn't say it's necessarily a challenge, but I think it's important that everybody at the dealership is educated on what they need to know on the product so that everybody's speaking the same language and on the same page to give that full-circle customer experience. So that [the customer knows] what the features and benefits are of what they're buying. [And so that] it gets installed correctly and used properly on the road.

What Dealers Have To Say:

Do you have any advice for other dealers regarding towing & hitches?

Murray: My advice: Know your product, and know what safe and unsafe towing feels like. This way you can represent it properly when you are talking about it.

Stonehill: We recommend that all dealers conduct training on a regular basis to ensure they provide the best options possible to the customer. We have annual training conducted by our hitch manufacturers as well as in-house training quarterly to ensure our parts and service personnel are up to date on all the latest innovations in hitches. RVP



Making the Most of Your *Parts & Accessories Department*

How to capture the attention of RV buyers for parts and accessories they don't just need, but want, to buy.

BY JENNIFER KING, RV PRO EXECUTIVE EDITOR

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAMCO

Keeping an eye out for new products in the market that are sure to sell in your parts and accessories department is a must, and knowing what to stock and how to display those items is just as important. RV PRO talked with Lisa Schoder, chief marketing officer of Camco, for that advice.



What 2025 trends are you seeing with parts and accessories for RVs? What are RVers looking for most and why?

Key trends I'm seeing are around ease of use and reliability. This comes from both seasoned RVers as well as newbies. At Camco, we take this to heart and make sure every product that we offer delivers trusted performance and is simple to use. That way, RVers can quickly get their site set up and begin to enjoy the experience.

What was Camco most proud of last year? What are you expecting for 2025?

We saw moderate growth in 2024 that aligned with the industry overall. We continue to be proud of our product innovation with five new patents granted and multiple patent applications. It's the new product that excites our RV community and shows how Camco is always at the leading edge of what RVers need.

The outlook for 2025 is positive! At the Tampa RV Super Show [in January], you could sense this feeling from consumers. They were there to check out the latest products, and they were ready to buy.

I see new cohorts entering the RV lifestyle as more of an opportunity than a challenge. Camco is that trusted partner to educate and equip them for their RV getaways.

What should dealers pay attention to when stocking in







their retail stores? How does Camco work with dealers to ensure they get inventory that moves?

We see our dealers as key partners. Their success is our success. Since we offer consumers end-to-end solutions for enjoying their RVs, this gives us greater insight into what they really need and also how we can continuously improve their experience. Everything that Camco produces is engineered with the utmost quality, durability and safety in mind. We don't believe in cutting corners, which means that dealers can be confident when they stock our products. We also have a very active social media and YouTube audience that allows us to continuously educate and engage consumers on the latest solutions, driving them to purchase from their dealer.

How can dealers make their parts and accessories department more profitable and visually appealing?

Dealers have a prime opportunity to engage with consumers and establish trusted relationships. When people purchase an RV, dealers can guide them through the essentials and offer valuable bundles, including high-demand Camco accessories like water hoses, leveling blocks and Eaz-Lift hitches, ensuring they have the necessary tools for safe RVing. The dealership's retail space provides the perfect environment to create visually appealing showroom displays that showcase top-selling products, while educating buyers on their benefits. During service visits, dealers can upsell complementary items such as freshwater accessories or sanitation solutions. Additionally, they can set up attractive waiting area displays featuring seasonal or promotional products, encouraging impulse purchases.

What new products is Camco offering that dealers should stock? Why are those products going to be popular with RVers?

In Tampa, we previewed new products launching this spring, such as the Rhino

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What else should our readers know about making their parts and accessories department a success?

The best advice I have is to keep current with RV trends and new product releases. The dealer plays such an influential role in an RVer's experience. Trust is built by recommending high-quality gear fit for the consumers' needs. RVP

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THE ABCs OF SUSTAINABILITY

WHY SUSTAINABILITY?

What is it about this topic that makes RV PRO dedicate a section of the magazine to it every year?

We can talk about being good stewards of the land. We can talk about conservation and the importance of protecting our outdoor spaces for future generations. We can talk about clean air, clean water and diverse wildlife and plant life. And all of those reasons would be well supported and a cornerstone of what it means to be an outdoorsperson.

But, frankly, it's also good for your bottom line.

In a recent study by Modern Campground, 52% of potential campground guests said they are influenced by a property's sustainable practices when deciding where to stay. KOA's Stacey Campbell says their research shows campground users are willing to pay more to stay at a location that upholds environmentally friendly values.

And the purchasing power of those who care about sustainability is nothing to scoff at.

According to Harvard Business Review, Gen Z and millennial consumers will have more buying power than boomers by the end of this decade. That means by 2030, these two generations, who are 27% more likely to purchase from a brand that shows it "cares about its impact on people and the planet" than older generations will also have more wealth.

"Our research suggests we're on the brink of a major shift in consumption patterns, where truly sustainable brands — those that make good on their promises to people and the planet — will seize the advantage from brands that make flimsy claims or that have not invested sufficiently in sustainability," the authors of the Harvard Business Review article wrote in 2023. "We're fast approaching this tipping point where sustainability will be considered a baseline requirement for purchase, and companies should prep now."

Now, two years after the researchers' made this assessment, the time is more than ripe to embark on a sustainability journey. In the next 9 pages, learn how Kartik Mekala is making a difference in Lippert's sustainability and ESG reporting efforts (page 43); how KOA is encouraging its campgrounds to "Kamp Green" (page 46); and how Foresight Management recommends making sustainable strides on a budget (page 50).



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HOW LIPPERT KEEPS TABS ON ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Director of Sustainability **Kartik Mekala** explains the standards the company holds and why being a "responsible corporate citizen" matters.

BY JENNIFER KING, RV PRO EXECUTIVE EDITOR

"Business as a Force for Good."

This motto has been embraced by Lippert across the globe and is especially meaningful for the company's sustainability journey.

"What we are trying to convey is how our sustainability story is already deeply embedded in the initiatives we care about,"" says Lippert's Director of Sustainability Kartik Mekala. "We previously may not have seen the connection to sustainability. However, with my role, I'm helping the company see and understand how sustainability is already integrated into team members' day-to-day jobs. We're also developing initiatives to help team members understand and connect the dots."

When Lippert was started in 1956, the company had a mission to be a "responsible corporate citizen." RV PRO spoke with Mekala in February after he returned home to Michigan from the Greenbiz conference in Phoenix, and found this mission is still at the center of the company's goals.

Focusing on areas that encompass ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance), Lippert and many companies around the world use these three touchpoints to measure the company's impact.

According to Lippert's website, those three touchpoints are defined as:

- Environmental – The company is acting "to understand, manage, and mitigate our environmental impact across value chains." Lippert says they are committed to optimizing energy consumption, water usage and waste generation.
- Social – Lippert says it provides "resources necessary to support our team members' holistic well-being, empowering them to be the best versions of themselves, at home, at work and in the communities in which they serve."
- Governance – The company has taken "a collective-impact approach to fostering shared value generation," including updating policies, increasing diversity on the board of directors and the addition of board oversight of sustainability.

These guidelines, as well as others the company follows that are in alignment with global standards, such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG), help the company prioritize its efforts.

"Our main focus is ... [to] keep the company compliant with all sustainability/ESG-requirements here in the U.S. or in countries where we operate outside of the U.S.," Mekala says. "For example, within the EU, there are regulatory requirements associated with [the] Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, which requires certain U.S. companies to provide ESG relevant data."

Mekala says as new directives and information emerge from the administration, they are reviewing them carefully.

"We anticipate changes to sustainability and ESG topics, and we are closely monitoring what those mean to Lippert [and] the RV industry," Mekala says. "We constantly look for reports from the industry association on government affairs and monitor tariffs on raw materials and how that is connected to ESG. Specifically, how those changes present as risks or potential opportunities to the company."

Monitoring and reporting on these efforts is now part of Lippert's annual reporting process, with the 2023 Corporate Sustainability Report as the most recent example (the 2024 report was underway when RV PRO spoke with Mekala in February).

Mekala says this report is an important part of how they communicate to the company's stakeholders — suppliers, customers and others — how Lippert is performing along its sustainability journey and striving to monitor, mitigate and manage its sustainability-related risks.

"It's not merely a necessity; we believe it's a crucial aspect of maintaining trust with our stakeholders," the report states. The company aims "to achieve environmental stewardship, drive product innovation and enhance our human capital practices."

> **"We believe in the power of sustainable materials and production processes."**
> – Lippert

Highlights From the 2023 Sustainability Report

- Natural resource consumption and waste monitoring took place at applicable facilities.
- A Culture Index Score was established to measure the impact of Lippert's core values, (Positive Attitude; Passionate About Winning; Honesty, Integrity, Candor; Team Play With Trust; Caring About People), leader qualities and strategic pillars.
- The company formed new Employee Resource Groups — the Lippert's Women's Network and Military Engagement Team.
- Donations were made to nonprofits totaling $1.1 million-plus.
- The company's goal of completing 100,000 volunteer hours was surpassed by 43%, totaling 143,000 hours.
- Operational efficiency was a focus with energy-related, cost-saving projects, especially natural resource consumption, using automation to help identify areas for improvement, reduce waste and optimize resource use.
- Introduced off-grid products partly designed to reduce carbon footprints.
- Prioritized use of environmentally friendly materials and processes aligned with operational and financial priorities.
- Monitored carbon footprint by gathering and calculating Scope 1 and Scope 2 greenhouse gas emissions.

Scope 1 emissions are direct greenhouse (GHG) emissions that occur from sources that are controlled or owned by an organization (e.g., emissions associated with fuel combustion in boilers, furnaces, vehicles). Scope 2 emissions are indirect GHG emissions associated with the purchase of electricity, steam, heat, or cooling. Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

- A total of 10 net-metering projects generated 2,598,205 kWh of solar energy in 2023 — a 253% increase from 2022.
- Lippert recycled:
  - 5,993 tons of aluminum
  - 9,400 tons of glass
  - 33,715 tons of steel
  - 4,409 tons of wood, plastics and cardboard

Mekala says it's imperative to get all team members at Lippert on board so they can understand that while they are trying to drive cost savings, they can do so sustainably.

"We are driving cost savings by understanding how sustainability layers into the decision-making process," he says. "I'm helping the operational team see avenues for growth and opportunities for increasing both profitability and sustainability for Lippert, while getting our team members engaged in these activities."

Lippert team members get involved in the "social" part of ESG through the company's community service initiatives like Lippert Cares and SeRV. Mekala says empowering team members to pass on best practices from one site to another is another way Lippert encourages involvement. One example is the "Just Fix It" initiative.

"It doesn't matter what your role in the company is, if you see something that can be done better, then just do it. Just do it and document it and share that and let your leader know that you fixed it, because we need to know where all these gaps lie," he says. "It could be safety related, it could be quality related, it could be scrap generation related. So when we empower our folks to make decisions in making something better, and let people know and document it, they see a sense of accomplishment, which makes them feel better and drives operational efficiency. We are trying to tell the story as to how and what process efficiencies occur. There are stories to be told and learning lessons for other team members."

Improving processes in this way may not seem like a "sustainability" initiative, but Mekala says it's best not to get bogged down with the terminology and, instead, think about what is really being accomplished — or the end goal.

"I think we are starting to see things from a lens of

profitability and not get buried behind labeling it sustainability, ESG — but truly look at achieving efficiencies while doing good for the business, people and community around us," he says. "It is driving our commitment to business operations, efficiency and sharing best practices across our sites. If one of our sites has a win, we make sure all of our sites are aware."

Luckily, Lippert isn't the only company in the RV industry navigating the ever-changing sustainability rules and regulations to be compliant in the U.S. and in other countries where it operates. He notes that working with counterparts in companies such as THOR Industries and Winnebago has been beneficial.

"I think we are very early in our journey, and we are learning from each other as we go, as we attend events sponsored by [the] RV Industry Association," he says.

Understanding the sustainability story for companies like THOR and Winnebago is helpful in meeting customer's needs and expectations, Mekala says.

It was also necessary for him to make a connection between sustainability and the company's bottom line.

"I joined Lippert coming out of the pandemic when the RV market was booming. Then later we saw the market shift," he says. "My first year at Lippert was when the downturn began ... and for me, the challenge was how do we persuade leadership that sustainability is bottom line profitability? How do we connect the two? Because a lot of time we get lost in how much the next project needs ... and don't think about how much savings a project generates for us in the next year or two, or for next five years, or for 10 years."

Mekala says he gained his ability to influence decision-making by focusing on what people care about — and at Lippert, the tagline "Business as a Force for Good" is where he found the sweet spot.

"When I connected sustainability initiatives to 'business as a force for good,' and provided a foundation that if a project or a process helps you tick off the Three P's — people, profit and planet — then there should not be any resistance. We should get buy-in from leadership because that project helps us meet our values, our goals, our vision as a company, and it's ensuring profitability when you're doing good for the environment."

Looking toward the future, Mekala says they will continue using their compliance obligations as an opportunity to increase their understanding and awareness of where risks and opportunities lie.

"I try to focus on meeting our objectives and using the foundations of the data collection to help us better decide future projects," he says, noting the ability to apply for grants or rebates when possible, either in the U.S. or abroad.

"I'm seeing brighter days ahead. ... I think we as a company are putting our mind and efforts into these topics and seeing it from a profitability sense," he says. "And I think we are heading in the right direction." RVP

PHOTO COURTESY OF LIPPERT



Kartik Mekala, Director of Sustainability, Lippert

Education: Electronics engineering degree from National Institute of Technology, Warangal, India; Masters of Business Administration and Masters in Sustainability Studies from Chatham University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

A former entrepreneur who had started a business in the outdoor space in India, Mekala sees his position at Lippert as a way to combine his education and passion for sustainability with his love for the outdoors.

"Using my background in electronics engineering, my entrepreneurial journey and my education, I have applied my skills in elevating our environmental and social impacts. I also help guide governance matters because any successful company changes start at the top. My career focuses on education, leadership, sustainability, ecotourism and Lippert's environmental impact," Mekala said in an interview with the RV Industry Association last year.

IT *CAN* BE EASY BEING GREEN

KOA encourages its campgrounds to achieve a **"Kamp Green"** designation, showing campers and their community steps they take to operate sustainably.

BY JENNIFER KING, RV PRO EXECUTIVE EDITOR

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KOA



Leave No Trace is a concept many campers and hikers are familiar with.KOA Campgrounds are taking it to another level with their "Kamp Green" program.

Started in 2010, the program supports campground owners' efforts to embrace environmentally friendly practices and educational events for guests. As KOA's website states, "KOA leadership understands sustainability is a simple concept but a complex process — to sustain resources and avoid depletion, a campground must consider all environmental, economic and social factors involved."

But with 75,000-plus campsites in the KOA family totaling more than 10,000 acres in the U.S. and Canada, small actions add up and make a significant difference, KOA says.

For the past six years, Stacey Campbell, director of Campground Design Services, System Operations, has helped encourage campground owners to embrace Kamp Green.

"The campgrounds in general are really good at conservation and sustainability because it's their business," she says. "To be efficient and improve their bottom line, obviously they need to watch their water and electricity. Those are big expenses, so they were all always pretty conscientious about it. But it wasn't really something they talked about much."

Making It Official

When Campbell arrived at KOA, one thing she put in place was a Kamp Green checklist — a way for the campgrounds to track their eco-friendly efforts and ratify those practices.

"This was just a way to formalize it, to recognize owners and campgrounds that were doing the right thing," she says. "Then, by participating in this program, they get a lot of little extra marketing materials and education, they get the logo on their website, and they get a certification letter in their store. It really gives them opportunities to share more with campers."

KOA uses this checklist system to encourage campgrounds to participate in the Kamp Green program. To achieve certification, campgrounds must complete at least one action in each category: Save Energy, Conseve Water, Divert Waste, Educate the Community.

Here is a summary of some of what some campground owners do to implement sustainable practices:

- Review technical, educational and support information provided by KOA and other authoritative sources
- Provide fun educational programs for kids
- Provide resources or events for adults on how to camp green
- Stay updated on new information, innovations and options for sustainable practices
- Support organizations, funds, programs and efforts like park or wildlife sanctuary preservation
- Keep an active membership with conservation organizations
- Volunteer in local communities
- Host volunteer activities like Pick Up America
- Make tangible, eco-friendly improvements in practices, buildings, equipment and processes
- Invest in things like energy-efficient LED lights, motion-sensing or timer-based lighting, Energy Star appliances, solar pool heater or solar outdoor lighting
- Remind staff to turn off lights and computers, use smart thermostats, green transportation and energy-efficient windows





- Use low-flush toilets, energy-efficient showerheads and sinks, recycle water for landscaping or use smart irrigation
- Eliminate paper waste when possible, install recycling bins and water refill stations, and use nontoxic cleaning items

KOA also suggests ideas like investing in electric car charging stations or special additions to a property like bee or butterfly gardens. Other projects could be planting a community herb or produce garden, using locally sourced food, establishing nature trails, and holding celebrations for Earth Day and Arbor Day.

Larger scale projects that campground owners can also consider could be historic restoration on their property; remodeling their buildings and amenities using green, alternative energy sources; conducting water studies; and repurposing items instead of discarding them.



Going Green as a Differentiator

KOA has conducted research that shows if campers have two campgrounds to choose from, they would prefer one that has sustainable practices in place, even if it costs more to stay there. Experiencing things like composting for the cabins on some KOA properties, water bottle fill stations, beekeeping and other events for the community have become a popular part of the camping experience.

Last year, KOA partnered with Fill it Forward, which provides water bottles with a scannable QR code, and every time you fill the bottle and scan, Campbell says, money is donated to a water conservation project.

Kid campers are especially on board with the programs offered by the campgrounds, Campbell says.

"Their whole life they've been recycling, so they seem to enjoy that and do well with it," she says.

Campbell just so happens to work in a LEED-certified building at the KOA headquarters in Billings, Montana. (LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.) In





fact, the company has plans available for campground owners to construct their own eco-friendly facility if doing so is needed on their property.

"Upfront [it's] a little bit more expensive to build a LEED building," Campbell says. "In the long run, it pays off in so many ways."

KOA provides building plans for a store and check-in building to owners that is reminiscent of the iconic A-frame building of the past, but it's designed to be more affordable and sustainable, and could be LEED-certified, too.



Kamp Green's Future

For 2025, KOA's focus for Kamp Green is "community involvement." And as of the end of February, KOA had roughly 170 campgrounds signed up for its Kamp Green certification — so spreading that message to its more than 500 campgrounds is also on the docket.

"Certainly, the goal is to continue to educate and inspire folks to do these things on their campgrounds to be part of the program," Campbell says. "There's a lot of people that are out there doing a lot of great things but sometimes just won't take the time to fill out the paperwork.

"[And] we will continue to focus ... on education and community involvement. We want to encourage more educational programs, sharing what some people do where they bring in beekeepers or local birdwatching, whatever might be the right thing to be able to reach out into their communities to bring people in and share with them." RVP

A Commitment to Sustainability

The KOA approach to sustainability focuses on commitment to energy and water conservation, waste management and education. After all, KOA and camping are built upon a love of the great outdoors. By preserving vital resources like land, trees and water, campgrounds will remain vibrant and thriving for the next generation to enjoy.

KOA commits to sustainability through:

Educating and inspiring: Eco-friendly campgrounds work to educate colleagues, campers and kids about the value of preserving natural resources through events, demonstrations, outreach programs and active stewardship. Kamp Green campgrounds inspire others by giving and volunteering in ways that support a healthy natural environment and the surrounding community.

Doing the work: KOA does the work by engaging in energy and water conservation efforts and waste management programs to be good stewards of the land.

Being exemplary: Kamp Green campgrounds set the example for others by taking risks, experimenting with new efforts and finding innovative and creative ways to care for and give back to the planet.

Source: koa.com



HOW TO TACKLE SUSTAINABILITY ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET

Make progress in this area with a few steps that show customers — and consumers — you're moving in the right direction.

BY MIKE TROUPOS, FORESIGHT MANAGEMENT

Demonstrating your company's sustainability efforts is becoming a business imperative. Whether you're navigating the complex regulatory landscape or sensing a rise in customer expectations, it's critical to build a proactive approach to sustainability before you're caught on your heels. Limited financial resources, technical expertise and time all put strain on companies that feel expected to now do more with less. Here's a look at the essential steps for sustainability progress without breaking the bank.

Step 1: Understand the Pressure for Sustainability

Before diving into specific strategies, it's essential to understand the source of pressure for sustainability so you understand where and how to disclose. In the RV industry, demands are coming from two places.

Regulations & Mandates: While Federal regulations remain in the proposal phase, the outcome is moot — international and state-level mandates are already driving disclosure requirements, and these mandates carry supply chain expectations. Last year, the European Union established the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). CSRD has extensive reporting requirements, including double materiality, risk assessments, carbon impact, reduction plans and more, while CBAM is an import tax on carbon-intensive goods.

California passed two pieces of legislation requiring Scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon reporting for companies doing over $500 million in revenue and business in the state. Additionally, California passed the Advanced Clean Truck (ACT) rules that require a certain percentage of heavy-duty vehicles like motorhomes to be Zero Emissions Vehicles.

Even if you aren't in scope for the regulation itself, each of these regulations has a value chain component — expect to have your customers come knocking for your sustainability metrics.

Customers: If your customers aren't feeling pressure from regulations, they surely feel it from consumers. More than ever before, consumers are highly educated, information savvy and willing (dare I say eager, even) to align purchasing power with values. Beholden to the end user's desires, consumer-facing brands are setting competitive sustainability goals to drive marketplace differentiation — and these goals rest on the shoulders of their supply chain, where up to 90% of carbon emissions reside.

Understanding who is asking, why and where they expect your data will drive your strategy for disclosure, goal setting and progress. Asking these few questions is just the foundation, however.

It is highly recommended that companies go through the exercise of developing a Sustainability Roadmap. Akin to a Materiality Assessment, a Sustainability Roadmap provides a holistic look at stakeholders' demands, material topics, impending regulatory requirements and corporate sustainability goals to create a strategic pathway for all your sustainability efforts. This effort builds buy-in throughout your company and ensures you're on the right path, not wasting time, effort and money on sustainability efforts and projects that don't matter to your stakeholders.

Step 2: Establish a Repeatable, Centralized Data Collection Approach

I always love to say, "You can't manage what you don't measure." Data is at the heart of any successful sustainability effort — a repeatable, centralized approach for greenhouse gas (GHG) data collection is essential; quality data is the cornerstone of quality outcomes. When your data is consistent and accurate, it can be disseminated efficiently across multiple frameworks and disclosure platforms.

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At this point, companies are struggling to field an onslaught of questionnaires, wasting time and money scrambling for data while risking human error or lacking expertise. The time is now to get your data in order — both for your disclosure strategy and your bottom line.

Here are a few options:

- OK – Build an internal spreadsheet to track key metrics.
- Better – Use the EPA Free Calculator to improve precision.
- Best – Automate data collection with an outsourced provider that offers human oversight to ensure data completion, quality and accuracy. Avoid solutions that rely solely on manual data entry; instead, look for systems that offer integrated, human-assisted analysis for the best results.

Investing in data collection is the very beginning of your sustainability journey. This data is necessary to meet both regulatory and consumer demands and simultaneously unlocks insights for your own company to find cost and carbon-saving opportunities. Don't shortchange this step — it's worth every penny.

Step 3: Streamline Reporting

Once you've gathered your data, it's time to get it in front of your stakeholders. Publishing a comprehensive sustainability report and leaning on strategic disclosure platforms can save you both time and resources. Instead of responding to a barrage of bespoke questionnaires from various stakeholders, a well-crafted report holds your story in one place and serves as a one-stop solution. By strategically choosing platforms that resonate with your customers' values, you can build trust and drive loyalty. These platforms often overlap with one another in the questions they ask, so be sure to understand the connectivity between disclosure mechanisms to make your reporting as efficient as possible.

A strong sustainability report not only highlights your progress but also illustrates how your efforts are aligned with broader environmental and social goals. In today's competitive market, transparency and storytelling are invaluable — they boost your brand's reputation and provide a roadmap for continuous improvement.

What factors affect cost?

Of course, implementing these strategies isn't without its challenges, and costs can vary. Factors that will affect the cost include:

- The number of facilities you operate
- The variety of fuel streams you manage
- The overall complexity of your operations

These all play a role in determining how much you'll need to invest. Recognizing these factors early on can help you tailor your approach and allocate resources more efficiently.

> **"Even on a shoestring budget, you can make significant strides in sustainability by starting with the right questions, investing in tools to support data collection and streamlining reporting."**



Where to look for cost savings?

With data at your fingertips, you unlock opportunities for immense cost savings that can be reinvested in your sustainability journey. At Foresight this year, a utility data collection process for one company led to more than $883,000 in savings over three years — a 781% ROI. We often find low-hanging fruit in utility optimization, sales tax efforts, facility energy audits, compressed air studies and renewable energy procurement. These efforts not only result in financial wins but also underpin carbon and sustainability progress you can report on.

Conclusion

In summary, even on a shoestring budget, you can make significant strides in sustainability by starting with the right questions, investing in tools to support data collection and streamlining reporting. By considering cost factors, knowing when to get external support and ensuring company-wide buy-in, you can transform sustainability from a regulatory burden into a competitive advantage. RVP

Mike Troupos is vice president at Foresight with Certified Energy Manager (CEM) and Certified Procurement Professional (CEP) designations from the Association of Energy Engineers. He holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Calvin University. A self-declared "energy nerd," Troupos has spent the last 11 years learning everything he can about the industry. He is in his element when empowering industrial companies to develop plans to reduce energy consumption and cut utility costs.

SUPPLIER POLICIES & PROCEDURES

	FUNCTIONS and POLICIES							
Suppliers	Stock Order	Critical Order	Promo Order	Stock Return	Shipping Return	Retail Warranty	Service Warranty	OTHER
OEM 1	transmit cutoff time free freight policy time in transit quantity breaks MIN qty/$ per item	who pays freight? what qualifies? documents req'd? transmit cutoff time what if B/O?	product mix MIN qty/item who pays freight? time in transit	how frequent? who pays freight? MIN $/line restock / repack fees	time limits who pays freight? documents req'd	documents req'd time limits what if installed?	documents req'd time limits for submit hold parts for X days time limit 4 resubmit	
OEM 2								
AftMkt 1								
AftMkt 2								

1 Add/change OEM/AftMkt suppliers to suit your dealership
2 Change font size to fit
3 Adjust Column width and/or Row height to suit the text needed to explain P&P
4 Add Rows/Columns as necessary to record all P&P

Mel Selway's Excel tool can assist with keeping a record of supplier policies and procedures.

Sustainability of Parts & Accessories Inventories

Three ways to increase efficiency and profitability.

Sustainability is the special theme for this month's issue of RV PRO, so I have dedicated my column to assist you in sustaining your parts and accessories inventories — efficiently and profitably.

Simply stated, I define sustainable parts and accessories inventories as containing the necessary mix of goods in the quantities needed during specific periods of the year.

However, you might be asking how do you comply with that status? One method for doing this is to record every sale, which should include ...

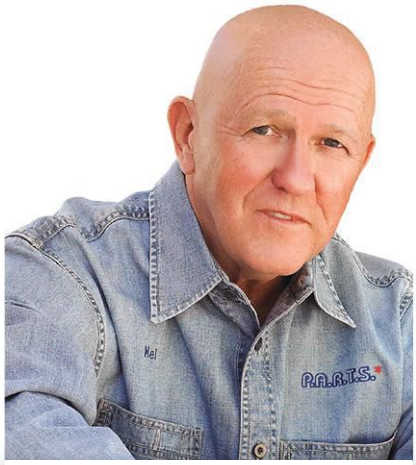
Recording Every Lost Sale

In the 1970s when I started my career as a parts manager, I attended an inventory management workshop. The workshop facilitator stated: If you record every lost sale, you could experience fewer lost sales.

What this means is that by listening to your customers' requests and recording and reviewing any that cannot be fulfilled, you have a better chance of having that item for the next customer.

To assist you in identifying, and therefore recording, a lost sale, I provide my definition of a lost sale: Demand, not filled from stock, and not ordered.

Most dealership management systems (DMS) offer functions to record and to report lost sales. If you are interested in developing a sustainable parts and accessories inventory, I suggest that you start an effective lost sales policy



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and procedure. Contact your DMS technical support service for assistance with these functions.

If your DMS does not offer a lost sales recording function, then I suggest that you place a manual lost sales form at each parts department workstation. If you don't want to develop your own form, I invite you to email me and request a copy of my version. The file name is "lost sale data form 050322."

Another method for creating a sustainable parts and accessories inventory involves ...

Your Suppliers

Most of you procure parts and accessories from at least two suppliers, yet most likely you have several suppliers. Each of these suppliers has policies and procedures for each of the business transactions between their business and your business. You should be aware of the current policies and procedures for each supplier and review these at least once each year because some of them might change and usually do.

Obtain a copy of these policies and procedures so that you understand how to properly transact business with each supplier. Do not accept a verbal statement from any employee of any of your suppliers. Review any communications involving parts and accessories from any of your suppliers when they are received so that you can update your compliance with these policies and procedures.

Some of your suppliers might have policies and procedures for the return of your goods. These could include returns due to:

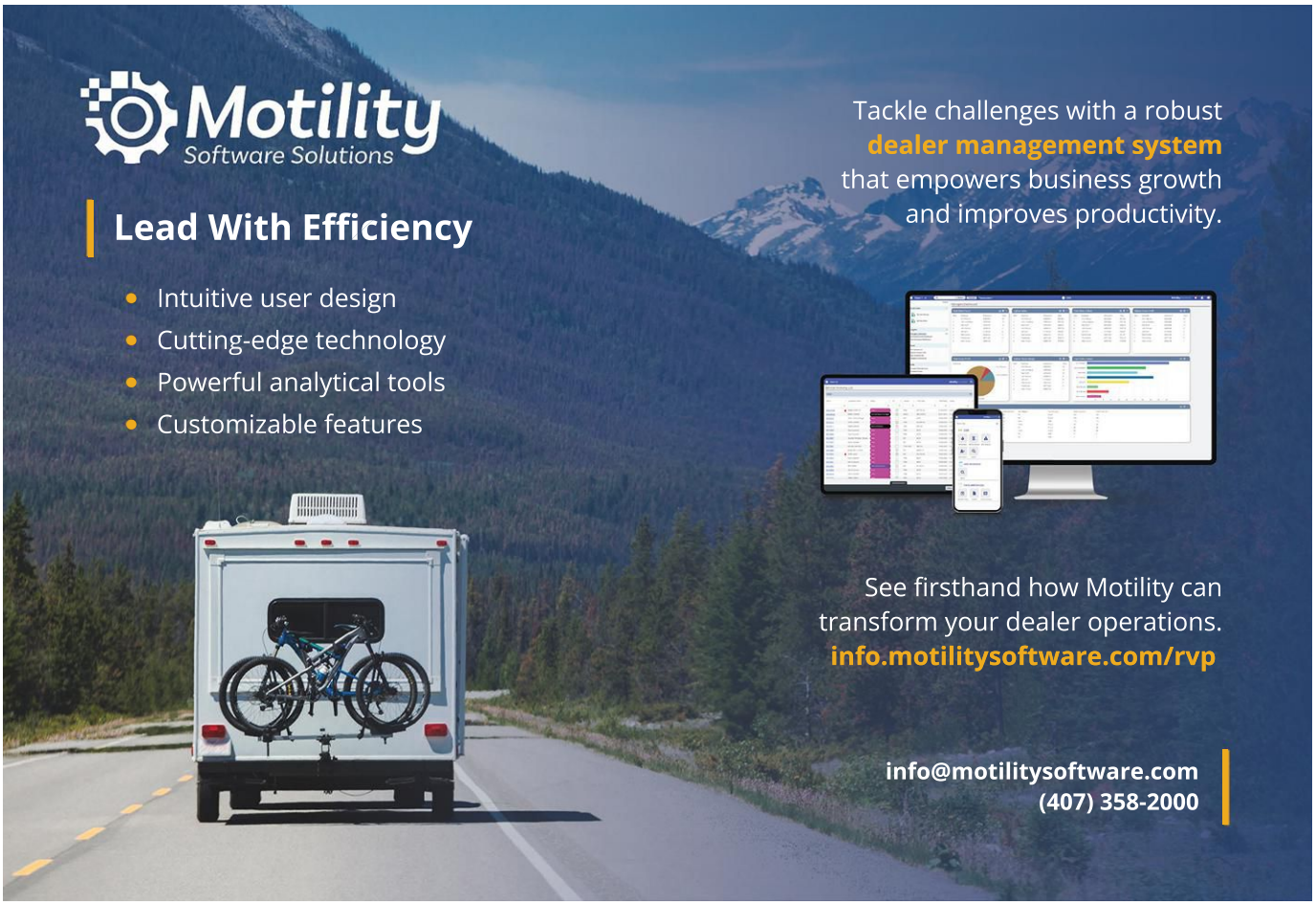
- ordering errors caused by your parts associates
- order processing errors caused by the supplier's personnel
- damages incurred during the shipment
- items that fail to sell in your market

If you are aware of a supplier's return policies, then you have an opportunity to eliminate unwanted items from your parts and accessories inventories.

To assist you in compiling a record of these supplier policies and procedures, I invite you to email me and request my Excel tool named "RV vendor P&P mstr 081012," a copy of which is shown at left.

Another method of eliminating nonselling items via your suppliers could be by contacting your supplier representative to discuss a return/order possibility. Most likely, you have at least one primary aftermarket supplier. Here are a few things you should do before contacting that supplier's representative:

- ❑ Determine the total cost of all parts and accessories that you have purchased from that supplier in the previous 12 months.
- ❑ Identify those items purchased from that supplier that you would like to return.
- ❑ Assign one of your parts associates to inspect each of these items to ensure that it's in the original packaging and



its condition is good enough to resell.

- ❑ Create a list of each item that qualifies as returnable, and determine the total cost value for all these items.
- ❑ Determine what cost of a replacement order you would be willing to place with the supplier to offset the total cost of the requested return items. For example, if you have $10,000 to return and you would be willing to purchase twice that amount in items that are currently selling in your market.
- ❑ Contact the supplier representative and discuss the possibility of a return/order agreement, making sure to remind that representative of the total cost of goods that you have purchased in the previous 12 months.

If none of these methods for improving the sustainability of your parts and accessories inventories pique your curiosity, then you could try ...

"I define sustainable parts and accessories inventories as containing the necessary mix of goods in the quantities needed during specific periods of the year."

Offering Special Deals

This method only applies to items that have a unit cost sufficient to justify the efforts to market them to customers. Perhaps a minimum unit cost of at least $75 might be your cutoff. Identify these items by generating a DMS exceptions report to show all items with a unit cost greater than $75, having no demand in at least 12 months and with an on-hand quantity greater than zero.

After printing the report, assign a parts associate the task of confirming the actual quantity and the condition of each item. Disregard any items that are not in sellable condition. Determine what brand/model/year of RV that each of these qualifying items fits. Decide at what price you are willing to offer each of these items, keeping in mind that the most you could get for each item is cost if you could return the item to the supplier — assuming the supplier allows a return. Identify any customers who own that brand/model/year RV, and assign your parts associates to contact the customers with a "special deal."

What Else Could Be Done?

Having offered several methods for developing a sustainable parts and accessories inventory, all that remains is this thought: The secret to success is getting started. RVP





Increase Retail Sales With Designated Pods

Strategically grouping merchandise can educate customers while increasing interest in new products.

LTYUAN - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Every day you have likely experienced newbie RVers coming into your dealership. Some people know what they want and need, and others are looking for anything to make their RV experience easier, safer and more comfortable. No one knows what's new on the market unless you tell them. This month's column is about introducing new products and how to position them with your existing stock to encourage multiple sales.

As you are ordering these new products, find out if there are vendor information cards or handouts that explain the new products to your customers. If the vendor has printed information, ask for double the amount of the products you're ordering so there will be enough for reorders.

If you don't already have acrylic standing sign holders, get the dimensions of the handouts and buy one or two in advance. That way you have them when the info handouts arrive. They are inexpensive and make the difference between a neat and professional presentation and a mess. Always clean acrylic with a mild dish soap solution with warm water and a soft, microfiber cloth. Wipe the surface gently and rinse the cloth frequently to avoid leaving streaks or scratches. Avoid harsh chemicals like Windex or other ammonia or alcohol-based cleaners. These can "fog" the surface.

If the vendor doesn't offer handouts, create your own using their promotional information. Your version will probably be shorter and more succinct than theirs. Use bullet points or dashes and heavier weight paper or lightweight card stock. We are living in the information age.

While some people are happily comfortable scanning a QR code for information, many others would vastly prefer something printed. Both methods are equally viable.



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.

Gathering Like Items

Creating pods are another way to inform customers about what is new and what works together to solve a problem or accomplish a task. A pod is a grouping of merchandise from either many different vendors or all one vendor. The most successful pods are those that educate customers on how to deal with everything from cleaning, toilets, winterizing, summer care, everything tire related, Wi-Fi, safety, kitchen supplies, fasteners for interior items and another pod for exterior fasteners. A pod can be freestanding on the floor, on an endcap or even a vertical shelf display.

The secret is good signage that identifies why these products are placed together. Let's say you pull together a variety of products that hold things in place. Your sign could say "Hold It Together Inside" (or Outside) — and the merchandise could be a combination of all types of ties, screw sets specific to RVs, ropes, twine and anything new on the market. Can they buy this stuff from Amazon? Of course, but if they are shopping at your place and see something they need that solves a problem, instant gratification is always better than waiting — even when delivery takes just a day.

Seniors or those with physical issues have unique needs. Step stabilizers, grab/hold bars, floor lighting and toilet safety rails for those with bad knees, balance or backs are just a few of the add-ons that can make life on the road safer and happier. Signage for this area doesn't have to use the word "senior" — just "safety" will work.

Security is another word that can classify a grouping of products. There is a sense of vulnerability on the road, especially for people on their own, families with children and seniors. A "feel secure" pod could include cameras, door locks, burglar alerts, sliding window locks and more.

More Pod Ideas

As I wandered around my home for inspiration for this column, I saw my cat lounging on top of the recliner. A pet pod is another great category that gives you an opportunity to bring together everything that is helpful to RVers with pets. Included in this pod could be dog ramps, spill-proof pet bowls, no-splash water containers, pet first aid kits, screen door protectors, absorbent doormats, furniture covers, pet safety temperature monitors, tie-out cables and stakes, self-warming cat and smaller dog beds, pet cams/monitors, nonslip dog pads, waste bag holders, specialty litter boxes for cats. There are so many options for pets, and this pod is a great merchandising opportunity!

Speaking of litter boxes, offer suggestions where people can hide a litter box in their RV. This is a biggie for cat lovers and equally important to their cats. In a previous column, I talked about "standees" — or full-size cardboard (or foam core) cutouts of people. This concept would work great with cutouts of dogs and cats either on top of the pod, shelf or endcap. Cute sells, and this is a perfect (purrfect?) chance to add cuteness to



your accessories area. It would attract attention, even from people without pets.

In the cuteness department, you can also create a pod for kids. This is, in a way, similar to the pet pod. It's another opportunity for standees — perhaps of a child playing with a toy on the top shelf of the pod. Some of the products for child safety are like those for dog safety. Over-the-door organizers can give you extra storage space for baby items or toys. A hanging laundry bag is also a must for kids of all ages. An edited selection of travel cribs that can convert into bassinets is a good choice for the kids' pod.

Garbage cans are vital for both pets and children. Consider carrying a steel trash can that has a lid on it to keep smells that come along with kitchens and living contained. Strong smells permeate the whole RV (whether good or bad), so having lidded trash cans that contain smells is a good use of your money (plastic will not contain smells). Arm & Hammer diaper garbage bags are considered great for keeping odors from escaping. Having them in your selection on the kids' pod would be convenient for your customers.

Decor & What's New

Another pod idea is pulling together decor items plus how to use them in an RV. Most people will buy their decor pieces at shops while traveling, but methods of installing them so they don't fly all over the place can be a very helpful pod idea. If you carry decor items such as art, towels, pillows or small rugs, carve out an area adjacent to these items for the things that make them work in an RV. Over the cabinet hooks can hold towels, refrigerator bin sets can organize the fridge to prevent spills. Don't forget peel-and-stick key holders, magnetic organizers, nano tape and Command Strips are little things that can fit onto an endcap or several shelves vertically with a fun sign on top.

Create a "NEW PRODUCTS" sign, too — but please be creative! "What's New" may be more fun, or "This Just In." This pod can be separate in a prime focal area that pulls together all the new items you receive daily. Then, these same items can be redistributed into your stock in bulk where they belong or added to specific category pods.

There are several good reasons to create pods. First, they are very helpful to your customers. Everything they need is in one spot. The related merchandise creates multiple sales. With good signage, you can explain why you chose these products. A similar concept can be found in independent bookshops where the employees write short paragraphs about why this is their favorite book.

Help your dealership become known for innovative and helpful merchandise. As you know, RV owners talk a lot about what dealerships offer — and what they don't. Creative and clear signage adds interest to your selling floor and leads people around the aisles.

Last but not least, a "NEW PRODUCT" sign on the pods — and everywhere around the store — is a signal to customers to check out new goodies. RVP



Cultivating a Growth Mindset

A blueprint for unlocking employee potential and increasing efficiency in the workplace.

BY MARGARET GRAZIANO



ICONIC PROTOTYPE-STOCK.ADOBE.COM

In today's rapidly changing business environment, fostering a culture of innovation is a must. Creating such an environment requires attention to your intent, environment and architecture. One of the most essential elements in this equation is the cultivation of a growth mindset, both on an individual and organizational level.

A growth mindset refers to the belief that talents and abilities can be developed through dedication, effort and openness to learning. Individuals with a growth mindset view challenges as opportunities to grow rather than as obstacles to avoid.

The opposite of a growth mindset is a fixed mindset, where individuals believe their talents and intelligence are static traits. Those with a fixed mindset may feel threatened by challenges and often shy away from opportunities that could lead to failure.

Organizations that operate with a fixed mindset often fall into the trap of stagnation. Employees in these environments may spend more energy defending their ideas and protecting their reputations than exploring new possibilities. As a result, innovation suffers, and teams are more likely to get stuck in a cycle of inefficiency.

Here are five key elements to cultivate a growth mindset:

1. A Desire for a Growth Mindset

Cultivating a growth mindset begins with the desire to adopt one. This requires a conscious use of self — acknowledging that no one has all the answers and that solutions often lie outside of conventional thinking. Leaders and employees must develop a willingness to explore, question assumptions and seek input from others.

2. Shaping the Environment for Growth

Creating an environment that nurtures a growth mindset involves more than just encouraging positive thinking. It requires an environment where calculated risks are welcomed, trial and error is part of the process, and regular feedback loops are established. In organizations with growth mindsets, teams are encouraged to try, fail and try again, with a focus on learning rather than on consequences.

On the flip side, environments

dominated by aggressive-defensive behaviors, such as perfectionism, excessive competitiveness or authoritarianism, tend to inhibit growth. In these settings, people are more likely to engage in defensive behaviors, rather than taking risks or learning from failure. Replacing these behaviors with inclusivity, open communication and collaboration, is key.

3. Optimizng Collective Genius

To optimize collective genius, leaders must create an architecture that promotes creativity and collaboration. This begins with a clear intent — defining the purpose of meetings, projects or initiatives. Every step, from project inception to delivery, needs to be carefully structured, with clear roles, timelines and feedback mechanisms. This clarity builds trust and ensures that teams can focus on innovation without being constrained by ambiguity.

4. Systems Thinking for the Big Picture

A systems mindset enables teams to think beyond individual components and consider the organization as a whole. Systems thinking involves mapping out how different parts of an organization interact and impact each other. By taking this approach, teams can identify root causes of problems and develop solutions that create long-term value rather than quick fixes.

5. Proactivity & Solution-Oriented Thinking

A growth mindset promotes proactive problem-solving. Instead of waiting for issues to arise, employees with a growth mindset are always looking for ways to improve and optimize. They approach challenges as opportunities to make a positive impact. This solution-oriented thinking is contagious and leads to a culture of continuous improvement, where employees feel empowered.

Continually Evolving as a Human System

A growth mindset is essential for organizations and individuals to thrive in today's ever-changing business landscape. By creating an environment where calculated risks are encouraged, clear architecture is in place and systems thinking is applied, leaders can cultivate the conditions necessary for collective genius to emerge. A culture of people with the growth mindset continually evolves, leading to breakthroughs in innovation, engagement and long-term success. RVP

Margaret Graziano, known as the Evolutionist, is the founder and CEO of KeenAlignment, as well as a Wall Street Journal bestselling author for her book "Ignite Culture." She has been recognized as one of Silicon Valley's Top 100 Women Leaders and her groundbreaking work is driven by her power to uncover and catalyze human potential. For more information, visit margaretgraziano.com.





VECTORBUM – STOCK.ADOBE.COM

How Managers Can Solve Conflict Between Employees

6 steps to resolve conflicts and reinforce a collaborative work environment.

BY JULIE GOWTHORPE

"Sort it out on your own" is no longer an option for businesses when employees are in conflict. Management goals commonly include maintaining harmonious work environments that make employees happy and motivated, but how do you achieve this when people don't get along? As teams grow and turnover happens, a variety of personalities and experiences become part of the landscape. In other words, conflict between people is inevitable. How do you, the manager, approach disputes between employees?

The answer lies in realizing how people perceive conflict with others is influenced by many factors including personality and life experience. When you look at your business, is there someone who struggles with others? Perhaps you've noticed that what they expect from others is different from what they deliver? Until you think about who you are managing and then what they have coped with throughout their lives, you will be unprepared. This is because how people interpret interactions and conflict depends on what they experienced in the past.

Is your business manufacturing, professional service or retail? No industry is exempt. Take this example: Jennifer managed a large coffee chain store. Taught to pay attention to dynamics, she observed how employees interacted and communicated. When two employees, Ted and Arlene, who often traveled to work together, became embroiled in a dispute over tips, Jennifer quickly intervened, reminding them of their friendship. Jennifer saw the ineffectiveness of this approach, noticing how Ted ignored Arlene while Arlene made jokes about Ted to another barista. Jennifer worried customers felt the tension. When the district manager, Lee, stopped into the café for a check-in, she immediately noted the friction. Lee met the employees independently and then jointly. Jennifer watched Ted and Arlene return to work, smiling and having light conversation. What did Lee do differently than Jennifer?

6 Steps To Resolve Conflict Between Employees

1. Identify the anxiety blocking resolution. Lee put this into action by talking with the employees about who they are, before she waded into the issue at hand. She learned that Ted had been exploited as an adolescent by people he trusted. Lee realized that relationships made Ted feel vulnerable, so she reassured him that Arlene and the company cared for him and there was no intent to harm him. Lee also learned

that Arlene was a single parent to two children and feared being unable to provide financially. Lee reassured Arlene that the tip situation would be resolved so she would not experience financial distress. She reaffirmed that work is a safe place.

2. Think like your employee. This effort can be proactive, so when conflict arises, you already know your employees. Ask questions like: What do weekends look like for you? Are they busy with obligations, or do you get downtime? Ask these questions with curiosity, not as though you are filling out a questionnaire. This genuine interest builds trust so that when you intervene in an employee dispute, they see that you care about their overall well-being.

3. When conflict happens, effective intervention is directed by empathy. How does your employee think about things based upon what you know about them and their life? For example, Lee knew that Arlene worried about income, so her intervention considered how Arlene needed to feel safe and secure that finances would not be jeopardized.

4. Cool your jets before taking off into problem-solving. Let's face it, most managers, owners and leaders find dealing with conflict between employees uncomfortable. This prompts a reactive response, whereby we want the conflict resolved — and fast! Unfortunately, this approach leaves people feeling unheard, dissatisfied and vulnerable to further conflict. Instead, slow down. When your reaction is to quell your own anxiety with a quick solution, like separating them and solving what they are upset about rather than why, it's placing a tiny Band-Aid on a gaping wound. Like Lee, take time to meet with them individually. Consider whether the experience has made them feel unvalued or unsafe (physically, emotionally or financially) and what would need to happen to lower this anxiety.

5. Keep the relational goal paramount. When you are meeting individually with the employee, don't lose sight that the goal is to heal the relationship between the employees. Unless they can work in complete silos, it is helpful to think of this relationship as a necessary elastic cord that must be flexible and intact for the relationship to work. Even if you can establish distance between the two, keep in mind that unresolved conflict can ripple across teams, like smoke from forest fires. Like Lee, shift from individual meetings to sitting together. As the manager, take the lead with a calm, assertive and compassionate tone. Reiterate that you understand each of their experiences and the purpose now is to find ground for resolution. Start by highlighting the positives you have heard and that you are pleased with the effort they have made to engage professionally.

6. Set a collaborative direction. In your joint meeting, summarize what you heard from both employees and highlight the things that were the same. For example, "Jill, you mentioned that you have always worked well with Mark, and Mark, you complimented Jill about her creativity. While this disagreement has been serious, let's not minimize the many hours that have been successful."

Even with resolution, reinforce the collaborative direction of the company. If Mark felt angered by having to take calls for Jill when she took lengthy lunches, and Jill felt Mark's tone was condescending, demonstrate your commitment to maintaining collaboration.

For example, "I understand you can be great workmates. To address this problem, we have created a schedule for phone coverage that does not always rely on Mark and will be sending out a reminder to the team that lunches are within designated times." In other words, make sure you close the loop! RVP

Julie Gowthorpe is a public speaker and author. In addition to her private practice, Gowthorpe contributes her expertise to podcasts, magazines and broadcast, including her own popular regional radio morning show "Turn Up Your Emotional Intelligence." Gowthorpe has spoken at numerous professional and academic conferences and served as an association director. For more information on her forthcoming book, "I Hate People," visit drjuliegowthorpersw.com.



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TOWING & HITCHES



WIRELESS CAMERA SYSTEM

Brandmotion, Novi, Michigan, offers its HitchVUE Magnetic Wireless HD Camera. Launching June 2025, the HitchVUE Magnetic Wireless HD Camera delivers precision hitching and visibility. With flexible mounting, enhanced color night vision and Brandmotion 7800 Series compatibility, it ensures a safer, easier hitching and towing experience. Mount it to your license plate for travel trailers or magnetically place the camera where needed, like a truck bed for fifth-wheel hookups.

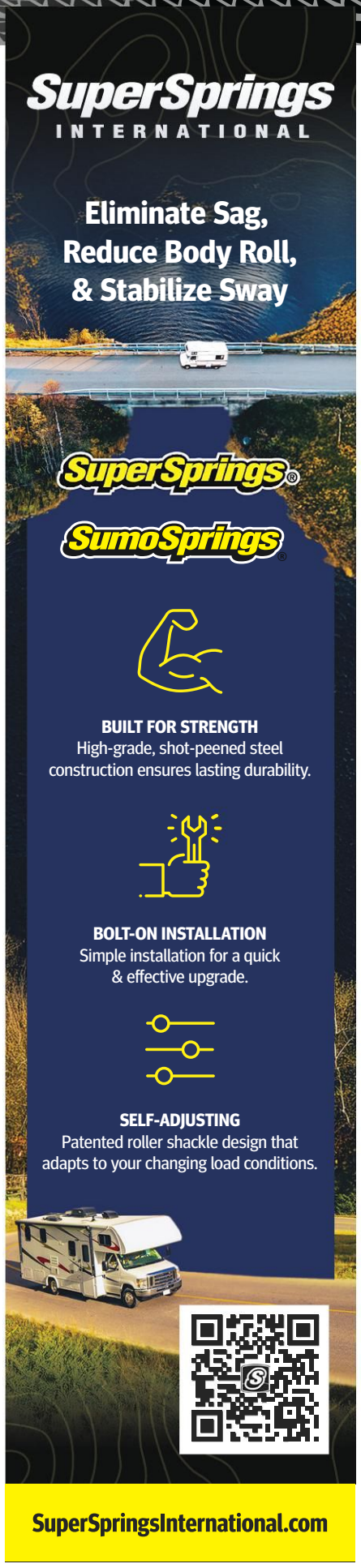
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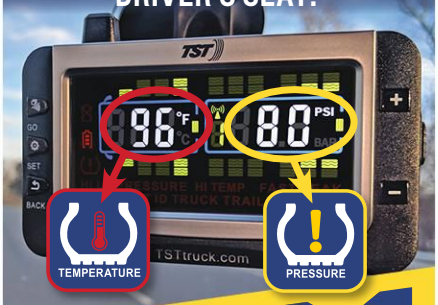


FIFTH WHEEL HITCH

Blue Ox, Pender, Nebraska, presents its Blue Ox BXR Series 5th Wheel. The BXR Series 5th Wheel hitches feature a funnel-shaped head that guides the kingpin into place while significantly reducing false hookups and trailer drops. True 360-degree nesting around the kingpin; no adapters are required. The hitch head is dual articulating: front-back, side-to-side. Adjustable in height to 17, 18 and 19 inches. The BXR2100 connects to a 2 5/16-inch gooseneck with a 21,000 gross towing capacity, 5,000-pound vertical load limit. BXR2410 attaches to standard bed rails, with a 24,000 gross towing capacity.

blueox.com



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WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION HITCH

B&W Trailer Hitches, Humboldt, Kansas, offers its Continuum Weight Distribution Hitch. Just snap in the bars, pump the handle and check the gauge for a perfect setup every time. Hydraulic components offer precise control with minimal effort, while a relief valve prevents overload. Built for trailers up to 16,000 pounds, the dual bar assembly handles tongue weights from 600 to 1,600 pounds. With built-in sway prevention and ready for the long haul, this is towing made smarter.

bwtrailerhitches.com



SWAY CONTROL HITCH

Equal-i-zer Hitch, Provo, Utah, presents its Original Equal-i-zer Sway Control Hitch, which has kept families safe on the road for more than 75 years. Manufactured from 100% American-made steel, this hitch has an integrated four-point sway control, resulting in sway control performance, weight distribution, quality and ease of use.

equalizerhitch.com

CLASS C HYDRAULIC LEVELING SYSTEM

EQ Systems, Cassopolis, Michigan, presents its Class C EQ Smart-Level Hydraulic Leveling System (Ford and Chevrolet chassis). EQ Smart-Level is an automatic leveling system that is configured for most RVs on the market — diesel, Class A, Class C, Class B+, fifth wheel and travel trailers. Systems come with a 12-volt hydraulic pump and run up to six jacks and four hydraulic slideouts simultaneously. EQ Smart-Level allows full operation of your leveling system when its app is paired with a smartphone or tablet.

eqsystems.us





ALUMINUM HITCH

BulletProof Hitches, Bradenton, Florida, offers its Medium Duty Aluminum Hitches. BulletProof Aluminum Hitches are designed to be lightweight and corrosion resistant, with a max towing capacity of 14,000 pounds and 2,000 pounds of tongue weight. Built from 6061 T6 grade aluminum, the hitches are machined to a tight tolerance, ensuring a precision fit and guaranteed to never chip or rust. Available in 2-inch or 2.5-inch shank sizes and drop sizes from 2 to 6 inches. They feature a 2-inch and 2 5/16-inch dual ball that is adjustable in 1-inch increments and secured in the channel using standard 5/8-inch pins. Backed by a lifetime, no-hassle warranty.

bulletproofhitches.com





TOWING PRODUCTS PLANOGRAM

JR Products, Clarence Center, New York, offers its JRP-TOW-T24 (JR Products Towing Planogram). Designed to enhance customer experiences and boost dealer sales, the Towing Planogram is stocked with multiple towing hitch pins and clips.

jrproducts.net



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COMBINATION HITCH

GEN-Y Hitch, Nappanee, Indiana, offers its Advantage Combo Hitch. The GEN-Y Hitch Advantage Combo Hitch offers versatility and strength for all towing needs. With a towing capacity of up to 25,000 pounds, it allows an easy transition between a gooseneck ball or fifth wheel hitch. Designed for heavy-duty loads, it's maintenance free and built to last with a durable black powder coat finish. Engineered using Solidworks for precision and reliability, this hitch is made in the USA, ensuring top-quality craftsmanship and long-lasting performance.

genyhitch.com



BIKE RACK MOUNT

Stromberg Carlson, Traverse City, Michigan, offers its Bike Bunk. Stromberg Carlson's Bike Bunk is a raised receiver on the "A" frame — the perfect place to put your bikes. The Bike Bunk allows any RV approved bike rack designed for a 2-inch receiver to fit. Your application will be determined by the turning radius and positioning of the rack. The all-steel design accommodates a maximum A-frame bar height of 6 inches and supports up to 100 pounds.

strombergcarlson.com



MULTIBALL RECEIVER HITCH

Pennington Hitch, Broken Bow, Oklahoma, presents its Pennington Flagship Hitch. New to the RV market, this patented and customizable multiball receiver hitch is rated at over 19,000 pounds and made in the USA. Convenient and flexible, it has an instant yet reliable swivel between three ball sizes, taking away the struggle from swapping hitch ball sizes out when needed. Includes a lifetime warranty.

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supersprингsinternational.com



ADJUSTABLE TRAILER HITCH

TRIMAX, Centennial, Colorado, offers its Razor Ultra Steel Adjustable Trailer Hitch. The TRIMAX Razor Ultra Steel Adjustable Trailer Hitch fits a 2-inch receiver and features a dual tow ball (2 inches by 2 5/16 inches). Has a 6-inch drop and a towing capacity of 12,500 pounds.

trimaxlocks.com





Get featured in our Special Products Focus section.

FIFTH WHEEL/GOOSENECK HARNESS

Valterra Products, Mission Hills, California, offers its Mighty Cord fifth wheel/gooseneck harness, which has a seven-way, RV-style connector that easily mounts in any truck bed to simplify the hookup of a fifth wheel or gooseneck trailer. The harness plugs into existing wiring without cutting or splicing and retains the use of factory 7-pole at the bumper, and the connector mounts in the truck bed sidewall, tailgate post or wheel well. The molded cable and spring-loaded dust cover protects from the elements. Available in 7-foot and 10-foot lengths.

valterra.com





WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION HITWCH

Weigh Safe Trailer Hitches, Lindon, Utah, presents its True Tow Weight Distribution Hitch. The Weigh Safe True Tow Weight Distribution Hitch - Middleweight and Heavyweight are part of the True Tow family, measuring vehicular tongue weight and providing the exact measurement and force needed to accurately redistribute weight across your towing system. It also boasts one of the simplest, quickest, and most accurate installation processes in the industry and comes in a range of drop lengths and shank sizes for various applications.

weigh-safe.com

If you're interested in submitting a product for the Special Product Focus section, submit to your sales rep:
Rebecca Tittel: rtittel@cahabamedia.com or John Gaskins: jgaskins@cahabamedia.com.
Or contact Managing Editor **Michele Moore for information: mmoore@cahabamedia.com.**



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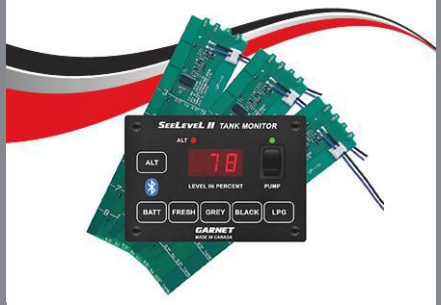
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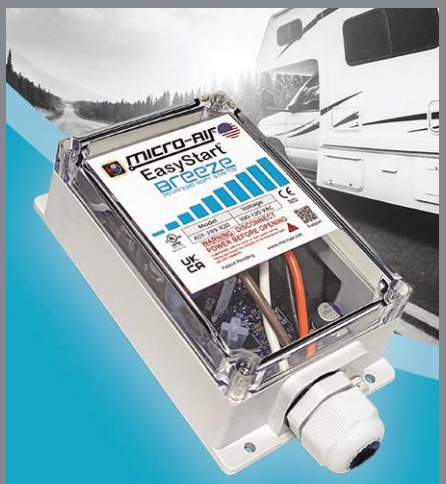


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Pit Stop



CARBON MARKETS 101



Amid the ongoing climate crisis and rising global emissions, a carbon market allows investors and corporations to trade carbon credits and offsets — mitigating environmental stress while creating new market opportunities. Think of carbon credits as a "permission slip" for companies to emit a set amount of carbon emissions (CO_2e) that year.

- Credits and offsets form two different markets, but the basic unit traded is the same: the equivalent of one ton of CO_2e.
- The average American generates 16 tons of CO_2e a year through driving, shopping, using electricity and gas, and going through everyday motions.
- Carbon credits are issued by national or international government organizations. In the U.S., while no federal carbon market exists yet, multiple states now have carbon pricing initiatives. California has its cap-and-trade program, while the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative includes 11 northeastern states.
- On the other hand, carbon offsets are issued by organizations that reduce carbon already in the atmosphere, say by planting more trees or investing in renewable energy. The purchase of these offsets is voluntary.
- International carbon trading markets have been around since the 1997 Kyoto Protocols. The emergence of new regional markets has prompted a surge in investment. As of 2024, carbon pricing initiatives operate in 46 national jurisdictions and 37 subnational jurisdictions.

Learn more at carboncredits.com.

JANUARY SHIPMENTS

27,629 (units)
Total RV shipments

21.9% increase compared to January 2024 (22,674 units)

"January's shipment numbers reflect the continued, steady growth we anticipated for the RV industry as we begin 2025. While we remain cautiously optimistic, these early indicators are encouraging and suggest the enduring appeal of the RV lifestyle," said RVIA President and CEO Craig Kirby. "We look forward to building on this momentum throughout the year, delivering innovative products to consumers that reveal the incredible destinations and memorable experiences that are just beyond your door in an RV."

What's Next in Outdoor Hospitality?



- *More Travelers Booking Directly:* Direct bookings through official campground websites continue to gain traction as campers look for a more straightforward reservation process.
- *Seasonal Demand Shifts:* Peak booking months vary by region, with the Midwest seeing a surge in summer reservations and the South maintaining steady demand year-round.
- *Flexible Payment Preferences:* Credit cards remain the dominant payment method, but alternative options like ACH are gaining traction as campgrounds expand their offerings.
- *Campground Growth Trends:* While small parks saw a decline in numbers, large parks experienced notable growth, reflecting shifts in property expansion and investment.

Source: RoverPass 2025 Outdoor Hospitality Report

HOST YOUR POLICYMAKERS

Did you know RVIA members can host their federal, state or local policymakers at the office? This is invaluable in helping elected officials understand the impact of proposed policies on individuals and businesses in their districts. For members who are interested, the RVIA Government Affairs team can help prepare talking points, policy positions and scheduling assistance.

Reach out to RVIA's Chris Bornemann, senior director of government affairs, at cbornemann@rvia.org for more info on inviting lawmakers to your place of business.

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