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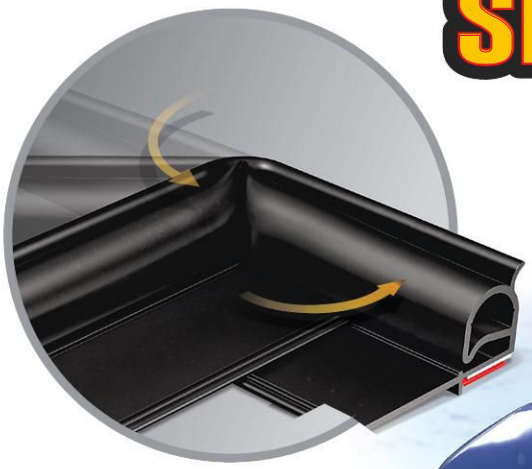


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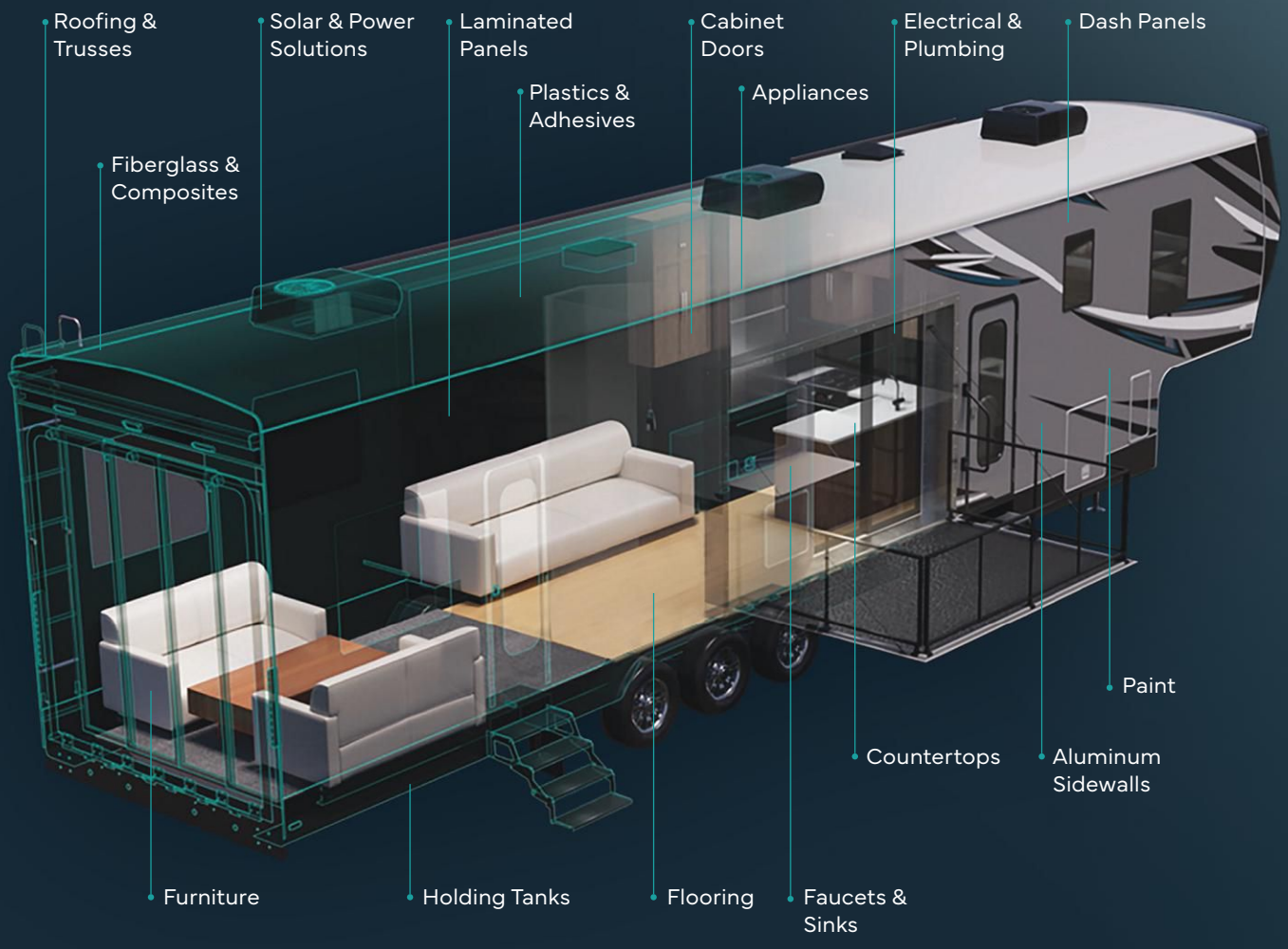


ON THE COVER
General RV President Chris Davis talks leadership. *Photo courtesy of General RV.*

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Jennifer King

Let's be honest: It hasn't been easy to see the numbers coming out of industry reports lately.

In late April, the RV Industry Association (RVIA) reported that total RV shipments ended the month of March with 32,162 units, down 13.9% compared to the same time last year. So far this year, shipments are down 12.1% compared to the first three months in 2025.

Statistical Surveys Inc. (SSI) reported that the RV industry experienced a 24.12% decrease in YOY sales in February. Motorized RVs were down 31.24%, while towable RVs were down 22.96%, according to SSI, a subsidiary of Trader Interactive that gathers data and insights on the RV industry.

These numbers feel sobering; there's no denying that. However, there are some bright spots. RVIA reported that motorhome shipments finished March up 9.3% compared to 2025, and park model shipments finished up 33.6% for the same month.

RV PRO spoke with RV Dealers Association (RVDA) President Phil Ingrassia, RV Industry Association President & CEO Craig Kirby, and RV Trader Director of RV OEM Strategic Initiatives Juliana Baena for their perspectives on what these numbers tell us so far.

"There's clear opportunity in aligning inventory and pricing with today's more cost-conscious buyer … They're very cost aware," Baena says. "Those who are adapting to that shift in consumer behavior [are] going to be the ones that capture meaningful share in 2026."

Ingrassia says there are mixed feelings among dealers. "Speaking with dealers this spring, they are being careful with inventory and trying to match stocking levels with demand," he says. "Dealer sentiment is up and down in our Baird/RVDA monthly survey, largely based on geopolitical issues and their impact on the broader economy."

Kirby sees positive signs coming from younger demographics. "While the current market for new unit sales remains challenging as the industry navigates broader macroeconomic and global headwinds, the long-term outlook for the RV industry remains incredibly positive," Kirby says. "We are encouraged by the evolving demographic of the RV consumer, which continues to trend younger and more diverse. This shift, combined with a steadfast desire for an outdoor and healthy lifestyle, underscores the enduring appeal of RVing."

Baena says it's important to meet customers where they are right now. "They're really researching — they're comparing brands, they're comparing units, they're comparing categories to see what their perfect rig would be," she says. "What we're seeing … is that trapped intent. They have the intent. There is a demand; they just haven't been able to convert."

It all comes down to how dealers capitalize on that intent. "We want to make sure that … you're being creative and innovative with the way you're helping those people finance their purchases," Baena says. She also advises that dealers pay attention to their digital merchandising.

So, while the numbers may not feel positive right now, the industry can still make this year successful. Now is the time to hone your selling techniques to move those units and get more RVers out on the road.

As always, thanks for reading!

Jennifer King

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HIRES & PROMOTIONS



Erica Matthews
Optronics International

Optronics International promoted Erica Matthews to vice president of sales. In her new role, Matthews will spearhead the company's sales strategy, fuel revenue growth and strengthen customer partnerships across key markets.



Karina Policy
Florida RV Trade Association

The Florida RV Trade Association (FRVTA) announced the addition of Karina Policy as its new marketing manager. In this role, Policy will be responsible for marketing several large public shows, managing sponsorship programs and sales support functions, and overseeing all in-house marketing.





Tony Diaz, Jim Alvarez, Marty Jennings, Dave Parker & Bill Eckhoff
Camco Manufacturing

Camco Manufacturing announced the expansion of its national sales team in April. Tony Diaz joins Camco as trade marketing manager, bringing extensive retail and service operations experience, and Jim Alvarez returns to Camco as key accounts manager and will focus on supporting multilocation dealer groups, marketing support and training initiatives. Camco also announced three new regional sales managers: Marty Jennings for the Southeast, Dave Parker for the Mid-South and Bill Eckhoff for the Upper Midwest.



Matt Olds
RVMP

RVMP promoted Matt Olds to director of operations at its Elkhart, Indiana, manufacturing facility, where he will oversee all production across both RVMP's OEM RV power solutions and Flex Security's mobile security trailer division. Olds brings more than 14 years of experience managing RV industry brands and operations.

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

In April, **LCI Industries** and **Patrick Industries** both issued press releases confirming discussions regarding a potential merger of equals. At the time of publication (April 30), both companies have stated that discussions are ongoing, and there can be no assurances that a transaction will result or what the terms of any transaction may be. Both companies also said they did not intend to comment further unless and until further disclosure is determined to be appropriate.

GIVING BACK



For its annual Volunteer Week in April, **Lippert** team members packed more than 100,000 food and personal hygiene items into 5,000 boxes. Those boxes were then distributed directly to local Indiana families in Elkhart, Goshen, Nappanee and Middlebury, in partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs. "This isn't just volunteering behind the scenes," said Michilah Grimes, social impact strategist at Lippert. "It's a chance to actually watch impact happen, from the moment something is packed to the moment it reaches someone who needs it."

YWCA North Central Indiana and Safe Haven Shelter named the **RV Women's Alliance** (RVWA) as their 2026 Community Partner of the Year, recognizing the organization's leadership within the RV industry and its ongoing commitment to community impact. The designation highlights the RVWA's role as a strategic partner supporting initiatives that strengthen women, families and workforce communities

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BUILDING ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

EVENTS

RVs Move America Week
May 31-June 4
Washington, DC
rvia.org/events/rvs-move-america-week

National Go RVing Day
June 13
gorving.com

Adventure Van Expo
June 20-21
Hood River, OR
adventurevanexpo.com

Overland Expo PNW
June 26-29
Redmond, OR
overlandexpo.com/pacific-northwest

RVWACF Golf Scramble
June 25
Middlebury, IN
rvwa.org/events/golf-scramble

Adventure Van Expo
July 11-12
Winter Park, CO
adventurevanexpo.com

RV Aftermarket Conference
Aug. 10-13
Orlando, FL
rvia.org/events/rv-aftermarket-conference

NATDA Trailer Show
Sept. 1-4
Nashville, TN
natdatrailershow.com

America's Largest RV Show
Sept. 16-20
Hershey, PA
largestrvshow.com

Elkhart Open House Week
Sept. 28-Oct. 2
Elkhart, IN
elkhartrvdealershow.com

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RV MANUFACTURING

The Recreational Vehicles segment of **Terex Corporation** renovated and enhanced its primary service center in Decatur, Indiana. The improvements were designed to strengthen customer service, improve operations and modernize the facility where they service its American Coach, Fleetwood RV and Holiday Rambler models, as well as other brands.

Grand Design RV's Worry-Free Roof is available on Momentum and Momentum G-Class fifth wheels and travel trailers, in addition to the Solitude, Influence and Foundation models. The Worry-Free Roof is formed from a single piece, using marine-grade materials, including high strength fiberglass. This advanced composition delivers impact resistance, standing up to hail, falling branches and other hazards.

Lightship announced an expansion of its Colorado-based manufacturing facility alongside the launch of a new customization offering. The company will expand its total manufacturing footprint from 32,000 square feet to roughly 76,000 square feet, more than quadrupling Lightship's existing production capacity by the end of 2026 and supporting new local manufacturing jobs as production scales.



RV DEALERS

Encore RV has added **Trailer World of Colorado,** located in Henderson, Colorado, to its growing dealer network. Trailer World of Colorado, a third-generation, family-owned dealership established in 1965, will now carry Encore RV's RŌG and VENŪ Adventure Trailers.

Grech RV announced a partnership expansion with **Mike Thompson's RV Super Store.** The collaboration introduces Grech RV's full motorhome lineup to three Mike Thompson's RV locations in the Greater Los Angeles and Southern California markets.

Dreamhaven RV announced **B&B RV Inc**. as its newest authorized dealer, strengthening the brand's U.S. presence with an overland specialist based in Denver, Colorado.

SUPPLIERS & AFTERMARKET

Meyer Distributing has partnered with **Norsk Lithium**, a manufacturer of high-performance lithium batteries specifically engineered for the marine, ice fishing and outdoor markets. The company specializes in lithium iron phosphate and lithium-ion chemistries to provide lighter, longer-lasting power compared to traditional lead-acid batteries, Meyer Distributing said.

Renogy has partnered with **MDC USA** to integrate a factory-installed, turnkey off-grid power system into MDC's new XT9 Off-Grid Extreme, a 15-foot off-road trailer. The system includes 525 watts of rooftop solar, 400Ah Renogy lithium batteries, a 3,000-watt inverter and DC-to-DC charging, all unified through the Renogy One Core platform. Renogy is also expanding its Elkhart, Indiana, team to enhance local service capabilities and accelerate response times.

GEN-Y Hitch launched "The DOMINATOR," an advancement in gooseneck towing technology that integrates GEN-Y's patented Torsion-Flex Technology directly into a gooseneck hitch ball for a truck bed. It is constructed from heavy-duty steel with long-lasting rubber torsion arms, rated for 25,000-pound towing and made in the USA.

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Not Just FOR SHOW

While ShowHauler's rigs are attractive on the inside, it's the towing capacity that captures attention.

BY JOHN MCCURRY

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHOWHAULER TRUCKS

ShowHauler Trucks may not be the biggest builder of toy haulers, but it might be the most distinctive. The company builds about four per year. That is about 10% of the total number of coaches the company manufactures.

As primarily a custom builder of coaches, ShowHauler takes six to seven months to build a one-of-a-kind toy hauler, depending on whether the customer elects to stay with the base white color or selects a different color for painting. Lead time is about a year from the order date to completion. The custom coaches start at around $550,000 and can reach $700,000, based on the chassis and other options.

Bob Morgan, ShowHauler's director of sales, says customers are attracted by the



ability to customize the coach, as well as having towing capacity. The most popular toys put in garages are motorcycles.

"We still have the 500 or 600 horsepower motor on the front, with a 12-speed automatic transmission with up to 30,000 pounds of towing capacity. They are able to put a golf cart, or motorcycles, bikes and things like that, inside of the garage area."

Customers will often visit the ShowHauler factory in Middlebury, Indiana, for a plant tour. They can select from a wide variety of available options for their custom coach. For most, it's an eye-opening experience.

"They see how they're built, what the structure is and how it's different from most of the other manufacturers in the industry," Morgan says. "They're also able to see different features for the inside, and different cabinetry and countertop options. We're not limited, like a typical manufacturer, who is only going to have three or four options of cabinet colors, countertops and tiles. I've probably got 50 different tile samples for flooring and showers in our display area."

There are many upholstery options, including leather alternatives made by Ultrafabrics. ShowHauler can also source leather furniture. Morgan touts the company's flexibility in providing options.

"We utilize Villa [Villa International RV Furniture] as our manufacturer, so it's very good quality furniture. We build the cabinetry in-house. We've got some flexibility if a customer wants a particular design or layout of a cabinet or a certain area for storage. We've had customers request us to build areas for storing long guns for shooting skeet."

Morgan says most of the chassis ShowHauler uses are Freightliner Cascadia, with the 600 horsepower (hp) DD16. Some dealers supply a Peterbilt 567 and 589 chassis with the X15 Cummins 565 hp or 605 hp. One dealer supplied a KW chassis with the same X15 Cummins 565 hp or 605 hp.

A CUSTOM SPIN

ShowHauler now has a standard line of coaches called Adventure, but all of the Signature coaches and all of the toy haulers are custom-built.

"Anybody doing toy haulers pretty much has their own spin on things, wanting to customize the coach," Morgan says. "The garage coaches, as we call them, will typically have a 9- or 10-foot garage in the back. Sometimes we'll have a bedroom with a queen bed slideout, or what they call a mini king, and a full living space in front of that. It will be a single bathroom, kitchen and seating. There will be a bunk over the cab."

Morgan predicts future iterations of toy haulers will have upgraded technology. He cites electronics as an example, with greater use of Firefly Integrations touch controls.

"Those will continue to progress and change," he says. "I think the biggest differences are going to be in appearances in the interior finishes of the coach."

Upgrades are based on feedback from customers and dealers. ShowHauler is open to considering special requests, Morgan says.

"If somebody wants to have a bed above where their motorcycles are stored in a garage, we can do that," he says. "We've done different cabinetry configurations. We've had customers use the garage for show dogs. That works well for toy haulers. You can have plumbing back there for sinks and wash bays if you need that."







A DIFFERENT APPROACH

ShowHauler's manufacturing process is decidedly different from that of companies mass-producing RVs. Customers touring the plant to observe are often surprised at the difference.

"WE'RE GOING TO CONTINUE TO SEE GROWTH ... INTO THE SUPER C MARKET FOR BOTH THE COACHES AND THE TOY HAULERS."

—BOB MORGAN, DIRECTOR OF SALES

"It's more like building a home, where you're building your outer structure and then you're building the inside," Morgan says. "We're putting in interior walls, cabinetry and things like that, versus the typical RV manufacturing process where you build the inside and then you put your walls and your roof around it."

ShowHauler has a nine-dealer network, mostly concentrated in the Midwest and Eastern U.S., for its signature coaches. There are no plans to expand that number because those dealers take all of the company's productions.

Morgan says ShowHauler would like to expand production, adding perhaps five to 10 more units per year.

ShowHauler primarily displays its coaches at the Hershey RV Show, the Florida RV SuperShow in Tampa and the Performance Racing Industry show in Indianapolis. The company also participates with its dealer in Rapid City, South Dakota, during the nearby Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

Last September, ShowHauler was at the Elkhart Open House for the first time, displaying its Adventure coaches. ShowHauler builds about two Adventure coaches per month. Morgan expects that to increase to three per month by the end of 2026.

This year's show in Tampa was a success, according to Morgan.

"We are display-only down there, because we don't have a Florida dealer for the custom coaches, but we got a really good response," he says. "We had a customer that came back and talked to a dealer later to purchase a coach, so we got a sale out of that on the custom side after the show. Then we have another dealer talking to a customer now, stemming from the show. For us, building only about 40 custom coaches a year, getting a couple units out of a show like that is pretty good."

BUILT TO LAST

ShowHauler was founded in 2000 by Kermit Troyer.

"He saw there was a need to have the towing capacity that conventional motorhomes did not have, but still have the amenities of an RV on the inside, versus the inside of a commercial truck," Moran says. "They have always featured a steel structure, with the exception of the slideouts, which are made of aluminum. So, they're very stout in the build. They hold up for a long time. The first four or five coaches that were built are still out on the road and being utilized on a regular basis."

Cabinetry is built in-house from hardwoods. Bathroom walls and doorways are built much heavier than most in the RV industry. The insulation factor is much bigger. Morgan says the process delivers more durability and structural integrity.

"It makes it a lot easier if a customer needs to make a repair or modifications to a coach, because everything is built just like you would in a home, where you can access it from the inside," he says. "Your screws and everything are all facing you."

During his decade with the company, Morgan has observed plenty of aesthetic changes in units. There have been considerable changes in interior finishes, achieving a more modern look. Electronics have improved. "During the last seven or eight years, we've taken big strides to make the coaches look more modern on the inside."

ShowHauler has an opportunity in the coming years to attract more customers who have previously been in the diesel pusher market, Morgan says.

"We're going to continue to see growth there, coming over into the Super C market for both the coaches and the toy haulers, opening up opportunities there. A lot of those customers don't like to pull a large trailer behind their coaches. It gives them the flexibility to be able to put their toys in the coach itself and then maybe tow a car. It still gives them most of the amenities that you're going to get in a traditional coach." RVP

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Axiom's Innovative Toy Haulers Are on ANOTHER LEVEL

Company founders say their intent is to 'revolutionize the way RVs are built.'

BY DARIAN ARMER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AXIOM





For Axiom co-founders AJ Jones, John Jones and Tom Ison, it was the beginning of 2025 when the stars aligned to launch their own RV product line.

Together, the three have more than 70 years of experience and are bringing that experience to Axiom, from the way the company runs to the products it produces.

"We came up with new ideas and different ways of doing things we wanted to introduce to the industry. It's been a long-term goal of ours to eventually establish our own company and go in that direction. The stars finally aligned for financing and building space, and the opportunity came where we were able to start," AJ says.

Their goal? "To revolutionize the way RVs are built."

"We want to completely change the aspect of what people think RVs are. We want to build a much better RV with high-quality materials. We have five different patents, and we're working on our seventh now," AJ says. "A lot of times the RV industry can be complacent. We truly wanted to buck the trend."

Although they know their price points are on the higher end, AJ says they wanted to establish a company that builds products with a high level of quality.

"There are a lot of expectations that come with a unit that retails over $200,000. Our quality is different. It was important to go to the higher end stuff first and develop that mentality with our employees," he says. "Our expectations are set at a very high level, and everyone chips in."

The company started with around 16 employees and has grown to approximately 120 employees within the first year.

Starting out, the Jones brothers and Ison went with what they knew: toy haulers.

"We started with the Vendetta toy hauler. My brother and I started our career in toy haulers," AJ says. "We all worked for the same company. We cut our teeth on what we started with and had a lot of experience in."

KEEPING CUSTOMERS COMFORTABLE

Before they even began building, the three owners put together a list of things that plague the RV industry, AJ says.

"One of the biggest things for me, as someone who used demo units in my previous life, was air conditioners," he says. "I would be camping in a giant fifth wheel with three AC units, and I could not get it any cooler than 80 degrees. Even with the best of the best, you're very lucky to get less than 20 degrees whatever the ambient temperature is outside."

Through engineering, the Axiom team developed a patent for mini-split air conditioners.

"Look across the country and worldwide, and it's the most efficient way to cool and heat an actual house," AJ says. "We developed a system where we mount compressors on the side of the unit to revolutionize the AC system in an RV."

The results speak for themselves. AJ says customers in Yuma, Arizona, were able to cool their 47-foot Axiom toy hauler to 65 degrees when the outside temperature was 107 degrees.

The next thing the Axiom team addressed in building their units was leakage issues.



"The No. 1 warranty claim OEMs always run into is leakage. It's a house on wheels. Seals break and leaks happen," AJ says. "Taking the ACs off the roof and putting them on the side was a good start. So, we thought, 'Why can't we take everything off the roof?' That's how leaks happen. Customers and dealers point fingers at each other, saying the leak isn't our fault. We eliminated all the holes in the roof. We're the first clear span roof situation where we essentially have nothing on our roof."

While there are still four vent pipes mandatory for code and solar panels, AJ says Axiom is the first he knows of to double seal everything on their roof, using EternaBond Sealant and also a self-leveling sealant for longevity.

"Ultimately we have almost zero holes on our roof," he says. "So now we have the best AC system out there and the best roofing system out there."

Thirdly, AJ says they realized that by moving the ACs from the top of the unit, they were able to get the interior height up to 9 feet, 10 inches tall.

"Our RVs do not feel like an RV. It feels like a house because we're so much taller. And it's not just the roof heights that saw substantial changes. We increased slideout heights as well," he says. "The slideout heights are 8 and a half feet tall. It's pretty amazing what that does. If you were to build a high-end house right now, that would be what you see. The perception you get when you walk into our units is unlike anything else."

It's not just the interior height that has customers' jaws dropping. Double-stacked and fully tinted windows inside the slideouts offer unbelievable views.

"We have the best views and heights, but one thing we found out in our prototype was that people couldn't reach the blinds with the high ceilings," AJ says.

The answer: powered blinds.

And while the powered blinds can be controlled right from your phone or a switch, it doesn't stop there.

"Everything in our entire unit can be controlled from your phone if you want to. A lot of the newer RVs have mobile-based apps. Our customers are able to use that, which a lot of people really like. But we also have a hardwired system. The newer touch screens are nice until it goes bad, shuts down and customers can't operate their unit," AJ says.

Axiom still has hardwired switches, everything available to control via Bluetooth from a phone and an Alexa-based system.

INNOVATIVE INTERIOR DESIGN

Inside is another patent by Axiom: the AX Ottoman.

"The L-shaped couches have become very popular lately, so for us, every floorplan we've done has had an L-shaped couch in it. Every floorplan we have seats 8-10 people comfortably. On top of that, we did something a little different to accommodate more seating. The AX Ottoman is super lightweight, all aluminum and fiberglass, and stores super low to the ground. It functions as a coffee table



and is hydraulic assisted so it can rise up to table height with four barstools that pop out from underneath. Move a couple latches and the tabletop raises up," he says. "We originally anticipated people using the table outside. It's weatherproof, so nothing rusts."

The next area of the product they addressed was the garage.

"We really wanted it to be different than anyone else and more economical," AJ says. "Everyone does the same HappiJac beds, rear mounted on both sides and opposing couches below with two beds. We worked with Lippert and developed the first side-mounted HappiJac system that utilizes seat belts on the other side of it."

AJ says they offer a really long HappiJac system with an oversize bed. Instead of the typical 60-by-80-inch bed, Axiom offers a 60-by-100-inch bed and a sleeper sofa below that is also 100 inches long.

"It can easily fit four to five people and has a TV across that the kids can use," he says.

The team was able to carry the double-stack windows throughout the unit and into the garage. And on the 4250SP floorplan, the electric side patio features a whole side wall of glass.

"The electric-assisted side patio wraps around. It's like a Florida room experience with glass surrounding the area and built-in screens, so if it's nice outside, you can get an amazing breeze," AJ says.

The garage also features a half bath that pulls out of the wall.

"It's a true 14-foot, 6-inch garage when pulling in the toys, but when you pull them out, you can pull out a half bath," he says.

Moving on from the garage, AJ says they have another patent in place that separates them from a lot of other manufacturers.

"Everyone always mounts their generators in the front of the unit, which honestly almost takes up nearly half of your pass-through storage, and is directly below the bedroom you'll be sleeping in at night."

The Axiom team developed a rubber isolated cradle and mounted the generator behind the rear axle of the unit. This placement cuts down on the noise if the generator is running and allows Axiom's units to have some of the biggest pass-through storage of any manufacturer.

"We have set the standard for pass-through storage," AJ says. "It's so much bigger. It's large enough to the point that when we developed it, we were able to put a pull-out tray out the front of ours. It pulls out and stores all kinds of stuff. We went another step further and actually developed the first drop-down ramp door in the front that goes in front of the pass-through storage."

It has space for bikes and kayaks. The ramp drops down so customers can wheel bikes in. AJ says you can fit four to five e-bikes in the pass-through storage, while the ramp makes it easy to get in there.

STAYING SAFE ON THE ROAD

For safety, the Axiom team has a patent for a light that goes down the entire side of their units that actually shines down and can change color. They integrated a built-in turn signal.

"The minute you plug in your truck, the color turns amber, and when you hit the turn signal, you have a 47-foot-long turn signal," AJ says.

Development also came up with a crazy idea to address the fact that truck beds are getting taller, he says.

"When you look at most newer fifth wheels, they are all slightly slanted toward the back, which results in excess wear on tires. With excess height, we were able to raise our bottoms to accommodate new trucks with beds that are getting larger," he says. "With the extra height below the gooseneck, we introduced our Axiom RV Easy Swing, a unique porch swing. It folds up and folds flat, so you don't lose any storage. When you want to use it, it's two bolts and you can set it up in less than two minutes."

Axiom also addressed the ride and handling of their units.

"When you have a house on wheels, the more it shakes, the more things vibrate [and] the more things break. But you're always going to have more damage with the house that shakes more," AJ says. "So we developed a suspension system that's never been done in a three-axle before. We use the CURT Touring Suspension System."

The Axiom RV CURT Touring Suspension System is an advanced, high-performance, coil-spring suspension designed by Lippert to reduce road shock by 50% compared to traditional systems.

SOLID GROWTH AHEAD

When it comes to sales and dealer partners, AJ says they've been blessed.

"It's been phenomenal for us. Every unit going down the line is pretty much retail sold. We had an incredible show season, and we were able to sign a really good dealer base," he says. "The biggest [focus] for us is that we won't grow irresponsibly. When you go from zero to 100 really fast, it allows for a lot of quality issues to happen. We will have steady growth to make sure we can maintain the highest quality in our products."

Looking to the future, AJ says he only sees growth, including plans to diversify Axiom's price points.

"Our product is so different from anyone else's," he says. "We're backed up with retails; it's good. With the direction that we're going, there is nothing but upscale and tremendous growth ahead of us." RVP



Ultra-Fab's Kingpin Tripod Stabilizer in use. *Image courtesy of Ultra-Fab*

Keeping Things Level

Dealers can help RVers stay both comfortable and safe on the road with solutions to keep their RV level.

BY MICHELE MOORE



SnapPad Xtra jack pads are made of high-density rubber. *Image courtesy of RV SnapPad*

When people think of relaxing in their RV, they might consider things like cozy furniture, residential amenities and plenty of storage. But ensuring an RV has a stable foundation also plays a vital role in making an RV comfortable at the campsite. To learn more about what's new for RV stabilization solutions, RV PRO spoke with Pedro De Velasco, head of marketing at RV SnapPad, and Raymond Padgett, vice president of sales and marketing at Ultra-Fab Products.

What's new & innovative in stabilization & leveling solutions for RVs?



De Velasco: The biggest shift we're seeing is a move away from one-size-fits-all solutions toward precision-fit stabilization. At RV SnapPad, we've engineered product-specific jack pads designed to match the exact footprint of each RV jack model, so RVers get maximum surface contact and load distribution every time. The days of stacking wood blocks or using flimsy generic pads are behind us. Innovation is also happening in the compounds themselves: high-density rubber that doesn't compress, crack or slip in extreme temperatures, whether you're in the Arizona desert or a Canadian winter.

What impact has the increased popularity of off-grid camping & full-time RVing had on RV stabilization & leveling products?

De Velasco: It's been a massive driver. Off-grid campers aren't in manicured



Setting up Ultra-Fab's tire locking chocks.
Images (top & bottom) courtesy of Ultra-Fab



An Ultra-Fab scissor jack.

campgrounds with concrete pads. They're on soft ground, gravel, uneven terrain. That puts enormous demand on stabilization equipment. Full-timers especially can't afford instability; an unlevel RV affects sleep, appliance performance (especially refrigerators) and long-term frame stress. We've seen a direct correlation between the boondocking boom and demand for purpose-built, heavy-duty jack pads. Customers are no longer casual weekend warriors. They need gear that performs every single day.

How can dealers explain to customers why it's important to stabilize or level an RV? What are the risks if they don't level their RV?

De Velasco: Start with safety: an unstabilized RV that rocks with movement creates real fall risk, especially for families with kids or older RVers. Then talk function. Refrigerators require level operation to avoid compressor damage. Slideouts put uneven stress on their mechanisms when the coach isn't level. Doors and cabinets misalign. Dealers should frame it as protecting their customer's investment. A $100,000-plus RV deserves a proper foundation every time it's parked.



Padgett: Customers expect all the comforts of home. That includes walking around inside the RV without it feeling like a diving board.

What kind of maintenance is required for RV jacks & levelers?

De Velasco: Jacks themselves need periodic lubrication, inspection for corrosion and bolt/mount checks, especially after off-road travel. But what gets overlooked is the contact point: the jack foot. Bare metal or hard plastic feet dig into asphalt in summer heat, sink into soft ground and accumulate damage over time. A quality rubber pad on every jack foot reduces wear on the jack itself and eliminates the ground damage that can cause problems at campgrounds. It's the simplest, lowest-cost maintenance upgrade an RVer can make.

Padgett: Greasing the gears is important. So is greasing the inner screw rod. Lack of grease on the screw rod is the No. 1 cause of failure. Ultra-Fab has a Zerk fitting that allows this, making the tongue jack last 5-10 times longer.

What else do our readers need know about leveling & stabilization solutions?

De Velasco: Fit matters more than people realize. A generic pad that's slightly too small for your jack footprint creates a pressure point, not a platform. That's why we built SnapPad around the concept of jack-specific fit: every pad is engineered for a specific jack model, so the load spreads evenly across the full surface. Also worth noting: permanent attachment matters. Pads that stay on



RV SnapPad jack pads are designed to match the exact footprint of each RV jack model.
Images (top & bottom) courtesy of RV SnapPad



the jack between uses mean you're never setting up without them, never forgetting them at a campsite and never dealing with that moment where the jack comes down and the pad slides out of place. Once it's on, you never think about it again. That's the point.

Padgett: There are so many options. Tongue Jacks, tire locking chocks, scissor jacks, fifth wheel tripods, landing gear and [Ultra-Fab's] PowerTwin II. Picking the one that is most valuable to your customer will keep them coming back for other products. RVP

Cooling Maintenance Starts Now: Prevent Peak Season Problems



Simple ways RV dealers can ward off summer cooling failures and confidently explain the fix.

BY SCOTT LICKTEIG

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DOMETIC



You see it every summer — the first heat wave hits, and the calls pour in.

Here's a simple, practical path to manage RV cooling maintenance early in the season, so you can help customers avoid bigger problems when the season peaks.

Maintenance: Why Bother?

Basic maintenance helps fend off the flood of peak season system failures that create service bottlenecks, angry customers, dealer distractions and frustration all around.

"The most preventable issues we see come from skipped basics," says Nick Cook, technical customer experience representative at Dometic.

Summer cooling performance comes down to three interconnected systems: air conditioner, ventilation and shade. It's the RV cooling ecosystem. Shade reduces incoming heat load. Ventilation removes hot, humid interior air. Together, they allow the AC to operate under optimal conditions.

"Get those three right," says Cook, "and you prevent most midseason breakdowns."

Shade: Maintaining the First Line of Defense

Shade is the first line of defense against heat load.

Properly functioning awnings and slide toppers can significantly reduce interior temperatures and overall air conditioner demand.

Dirt, grit, mildew and sagging can damage fabric and hardware. Before diagnosing AC performance issues, take these three steps to make sure shade systems are functioning as designed — so your AC isn't working harder than it should.



Fabric Condition & Cleanliness (Baseline Inspection)

Inspect awning and slide topper fabric for:

- Mildew or biological growth
- Staining and odor retention
- Fabric stretching or deformation

- Damage caused by improper wet storage

If you find mildew or other biological growth on vinyl fabric, here's a service-approved cleaning method. Remember: this is only for use on vinyl.

- Mix ¼ cup of mild dish soap and ¼ cup of bleach in 5 gallons of water
- Fully extend the fabric, then saturate it
- Partially close the fabric with the solution still on it
- Allow the solution to remain for approximately 5 minutes
- Re-extend and rinse thoroughly
- Ensure fabric is completely dry before retraction



Sagging & Water Pooling Prevention (Slide Toppers)

Sagging fabric reduces effective shade coverage, increases heat gain at the slide roof and contributes to AC complaints tied to elevated cabin temperatures.

A common cause is water pooling. Pooling stretches the material and reduces its shading capability. Here's what to look for and address when you inspect:

- Verify torsion spring tension and readjust as needed
- Replace severely stretched fabric (tension adjustments cannot restore elasticity)
- Confirm correct rollout alignment and hardware positioning



Essential Protection Hardware Verification

Proper hardware setup ensures consistent tension, full coverage and long-term shade performance. Put particular focus on these structural essentials:

- Anti-billow devices
- Spacer brackets
- Cradle kits

Anti-billow devices stop the topper from unrolling in transit. They need to point up at an angle between 11 and 1 o'clock. Twelve o'clock is ideal. Remember that toppers over 192 inches require two devices.

Spacer brackets are required when slide flanges are thicker than standard. Make sure they are installed and working to prevent fabric chafing and premature wear.

Cradle kits are a must. They are required for anything over 198 inches and helpful on any long topper to prevent roller-tube bowing. Make sure they're adequate and secure.

Ventilation: Keeping the Air Flowing

Vent fans are a powerful piece of cooling performance. They reduce interior humidity and expel hot air, allowing the AC to operate at peak efficiency.

Before you dive too deep into the AC's performance, check the vent fan.



Operational Condition

Start with these steps. They're simple and can make a big difference.

- Clean fan screens
- Verify fan motors spin freely and replace noisy or slow responding units
- Inspect rain sensors on equipped models and clean as necessary
- Inspect plunger switches for corrosion or sticking
- Confirm roof vent lids open fully and seals are intact



Preventive Ventilation System Maintenance

Vent components exposed to heat, UV and moisture degrade quickly. Take these steps to improve future reliability and avoid midseason failures.

- Lubricate fan motors where applicable to maintain rated fan speed and prolong motor service life
- Replace brittle, cracked or UV damaged vent lids to ensure full opening range and prevent storm related failures
- Verify ventilation components are structurally sound prior to summer operation, and you can reduce midseason service visits tied to airflow and moisture complaints

The AC Unit: The Last Piece of the Puzzle

The rooftop AC is the primary — and most complicated — cooling engine. Most issues come back to a component or voltage issue, but before you get too deep, take the unit's temperature.



Confirm Baseline AC Performance (Before Component Condemnation)

Start by verifying temperature split to determine whether the AC is fundamentally capable of cooling.

- Use a thermometer at the return and the closest supply vent
- The split should be in the 18-20 F range (Note: High humidity conditions can reduce differential without indicating failure)
- If it's below range, begin electrical and mechanical testing of the compressor, fan motor and capacitors

Then, verify initial airflow. Restricted airflow reduces heat transfer efficiency and can falsely appear as low cooling output.

- Inspect return air filters for restriction
- Check ducts and baffles for collapse, blockage or misalignment
- Inspect evaporator and condenser coils for debris or contamination



Identify Mechanical & Refrigeration Red Flags

Next, you'll want to perform a mechanical component inspection.

- Observe condenser and evaporator fan operation
- Listen for abnormal motor noise or irregular cycling
- Inspect capacitors for visual damage or bulging

Then look for refrigeration issue indicators. Be sure to check for oily

residue near fittings or coils and inspect for signs of excessive frost, icing or abnormal condensation.



Electrical Supply & Control Diagnostics

Finally, do voltage and amperage testing. Undervoltage is a common contributor to AC underperformance and premature component failure.

This type of testing should only be performed by professionals.

- Measure incoming voltage at the unit
- Confirm voltage in/out at the control board
- Verify amperage draw on primary components (compressor, fan motor)
- Inspect wiring continuity between thermostat, control board and components
- Confirm connections are secure and corrosion free
- If appropriate, bypass wiring with direct connection when isolating suspected harness issues

Level-Up Your Expertise

There is another type of maintenance that can keep you ahead of the game: training. Expanding your knowledge and growing your skill set prepare you for more complex issues and help you deliver better customer service.

There's no shortage of technical content out there, but if you are looking for a deeper, system-level understanding, consider structured, interactive training that looks at the whole cooling picture.

One program for RV service techs is the Dometic Product Academy (DPA), which focuses on how shade, ventilation and air conditioning work together. Over 1,000 technicians choose DPA as their primary learning resource.

Your Summer Just Got Cooler

Stronger cooling expertise leads to stronger service performance. When you understand the entire cooling ecosystem — shade, ventilation and AC operation — you can diagnose issues faster, reduce no fault found outcomes and prevent avoidable midseason failures. And it makes it easier to communicate the ecosystem and basic maintenance to RV owners.

A quick conversation at pickup can go a long way. Remind them to use shade, run ventilation and keep up with basic maintenance.

Communication, maintenance and knowing what to look for before it becomes a problem are the keys to a smoother summer service season. RVP

Scott Lickteig is the customer experience technical service and warranty manager at Dometic, where he oversees technical service and warranty support to help dealers and customers navigate complex challenges. His experience is focused on strengthening service operations and ensuring Dometic remains a trusted, reliable partner throughout the ownership journey. For more information, visit dometic.com.



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Leading by Example

General RV President Chris Davis on what it takes to be an industry leader and instill a growth mindset in employees.

BY JENNIFER KING

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GENERAL RV

While Chris Davis has always been attracted to entrepreneurship, his move to the RV industry came from a helpful connection — his family.

His wife, Genna, is part of the Baidas family, which opened the business in 1953 as a Mobil gas station in Detroit, Michigan.

That venture has grown into 23 full-service dealerships in 10 states, with the son of founder Abe Baidas, Rob Baidas, serving as chairman. Loren Baidas, grandson of founder Abe Baidas and son of long-time President Richard "Dick" Baidas, serves as CEO.

Davis was named president in 2024 after serving as director of finance since 2011. With a background in real estate and banking and a degree in finance from Miami University, Davis says coming onboard with the family business was good timing.

"I think they've always had a growth mindset. I think that's what's always attracted me to working with them," Davis says. "We're never complacent. We're always moving forward, and growth doesn't always necessarily mean we're adding locations. Growth can be we're building new buildings; we're making a better customer experience."



The Many Forms of Growth

Davis says during his first 10 years with the company, growth is where much of his time was focused.

"There wasn't a facility that we didn't touch and make better, make bigger, add service capacity," he says.

It was important to the company







to invest in the markets it believed in, he says, and ensure the facilities reflected the experience they wanted customers to have. The ability to execute on the changes the company wanted to make was appealing, Davis says, noting that progress can be slow in a larger corporation like where he used to work.

"When you go to a family business, [it's] the exact opposite of a corporate environment. We are able to move quickly, try new things and say 'why not make that change?'" Davis says.

In addition to being involved in the company's real estate transactions and its Finance & Insurance team, Davis was also involved in construction projects — wearing a number of hats like many people do in a family business.

"I wanted to be a leader on the team, and I wanted to make an impact, and I wanted to just work hard," he says.

As the company grew and began building its leadership team, Davis says they added a few titles such as CFO and human resources director, while other titles were realigned on the leadership team, including him being named president.

"General RV is, with their leadership team, incredibly transparent," Davis says. "We've got a very good leadership team that we've built over the last 15-plus years, but many of them have more tenure than that ... so it's exciting to be able to work with a team that has that."

In addition to the 23 retail and service locations, General RV operates a pre-delivery inspection (PDI) facility in Elkhart, Indiana. This is where coaches are prepped for sale.

General RV is focused on bigger markets, and recently add a location in North Carolina where there has been a lot of population growth.

"We like the synergy of our locations being a couple hours apart from each other," Davis says. "So there's a little bit of a synergy you get from sharing resources and inventory and things like that."

It's not in the company's plans to open locations in what they would consider B or C markets, he says.

"We like the big markets. We like to be on the freeway. And that's really kind of our core. So you'll probably never see us go to tertiary markets ... that isn't part of our formula."

The People Differentiator

One of the company's most important assets — if not the most important — is its people.

"We think of people as one of our biggest differentiators. We think it's part of what makes us unique," Davis says. "I think enthusiastic is a great way to describe [them]. We have a great group that is always willing to help, whether ... it's a resource issue and we're staffing a show in another market — can we help send some people from store A to B to help that inventory flow? I think our people are always willing to help out our

other stores and our other teammates."

Davis says you'd never hear a team member from Florida refuse to help out a team in Michigan, for example.

"That's not part of our DNA. [You] would not last very long if you're not willing to help. ... We look at it [as] they're all General RV locations. We're all trying to move them forward, and we know it's a team effort to make it happen. So we want to make sure that everyone's playing a role in supporting that."

Facing the Ups & Downs

While the last few years have been a little tough on the industry, Davis says General RV is weathering the storms.

"Overall, I think we're in a really good spot. We've added nine locations over the last three years. So I think we had a very disciplined approach to how we wanted to grow. I think that's one thing [that] is absolutely unique about us," he says.

It was important for General RV to have a disciplined strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic and coming out of it. Davis says they were focused on making all of their facilities and customer service better.

"We're entering our third difficult year of RV business; we've been preparing for it," he says. "We've focused on how [to] integrate the nine new locations into General RV ... we really want to focus on those new locations and making sure that we're really progressing them to become a General RV store."

As for the leadership teams at each store, Davis says they typically come from management at other locations, bringing the company's story and formula to the new local team.

Davis says that while 2026 could be a difficult year, he feels it's important to focus on the fundamentals, so you're ready when the market does come back.

One way they're focusing on the fundamentals is by improving customer satisfaction. The dealerships have started every meeting discussing a customer service topic, he says. General RV's customer satisfaction metric tool, Net Promoter Score (NPS), went from an average of mid-30s three years ago to a company high of 55 this year thanks to that focus on customer service. And they're not done improving yet.

"It's taking care of the customer, and that's what it's all about. That's part of the fundamentals," he says.

For General RV's leadership team, it's important to stay dedicated to people development and training, growing new leaders for the business, Davis says.

"We'll always be a company that focuses on people at end of the day," he says. "That growth mindset — we're never going to be complacent. You might not see us grow locations, but that doesn't mean we're done growing, finding ways to get better.

"And I think we have a mindset of always being willing to help, always willing to be a team player. I think a lot of [employees] share the same philosophy — the drive to be a better company every single day." RVP



Q&A: THE VALUE OF RVDA LEADERSHIP & MEMBERSHIP

How dealers benefit from involvement in the RV Dealers Association.

BY JENNIFER KING


Ingrassia


Been

One way to build leadership opportunities and increase your professional development is to join and deepen your involvement with the RV Dealers Association (RVDA). RV PRO spoke with RVDA President Phil Ingrassia and this year's board of directors chairman, Bob Been of Blue Compass RV, to learn more about why this association is so valuable.

Q: What are the benefits of joining RVDA?

Been: As a dealer who's been involved with RVDA for years, I can tell you it's hard to overstate how important it is to stay connected with our industry partners and the external forces that impact our businesses. RVDA serves as the national voice for dealers, working on federal and state issues that directly affect profitability — everything from tax policy to consumer regulations to analysis of dealer-manufacturer agreements. Many dealers say simply staying ahead of these issues justifies their membership.

A great example is last year's major legislative win. RVDA, working closely with RVIA [RV Industry Association], helped restore full floorplan interest deductibility for travel trailers for all dealers. That put money back into dealers' pockets. Whether you're a family-run store like the one I used to own, or part of a larger group like Blue Compass, we need to work together to make those kinds of outcomes possible. There are other things on the horizon as well — like extending the deductibility of consumer loan interest for auto that was passed last year to RVs as well. RVs remain eligible for the second home mortgage interest deduction for those that itemize their taxes, but this would allow those that don't itemize to get a tax break.

Ingrassia: Another major benefit is continuing education and professional development. Through the Mike Molino RV Learning Center, members have access to affordable fixed-operations certification programs, online training and the annual RV Dealers Convention/Expo. These resources strengthen service and parts management, sales processes and overall dealership performance.

While the RV Technical Institute (RVTI) focuses on technician training and certification, the RV Learning Center supports the fixed-ops staff, including warranty administrators. These employees have a huge impact on customer satisfaction and dealership profitability. They expect and deserve training and support, just like our valuable technicians.

Q: What's the path to leadership within RVDA?

Been: The path is open and very accessible. Most leaders start the same way I did — by volunteering for a committee or task force, such as Convention/Expo, Industry Relations or Government Affairs. From there, dealers may be nominated to serve on the RVDA board of delegates. That often leads to opportunities on the RVDA board of directors, and eventually, for those who get nominated, officer roles.

Ingrassia: We also see many leaders rise through their state and local associations. Bob is a great example — he was active in his home state Arizona's dealer group and became a tremendous leader at the national level. One thing I've always appreciated is that even though dealers compete with one another every day, they come together through RVDA to strengthen and protect the industry. And I can't emphasize enough how critical state associations are in that leadership pipeline. They're often the first step for future national leaders.

RVDA does monitor state legislation affecting RV dealers, but in many cases legislative tracking services do not flag a bill until it has already moved through several stages of the legislative process. In states with short legislative sessions, that delay can be especially harmful because it leaves less time to educate policymakers and respond effectively. Dealers who maintain relationships with state legislators, regulators or state dealer associations help RVDA identify emerging issues earlier, so we can work with dealers, RVIA and other stakeholders to address harmful proposals and support positive changes.

Q: Why is serving in these leadership roles valuable for dealers?

Been: Leadership roles at the local, state and national levels give dealers a direct hand in shaping the future of the industry. You gain early insight into emerging issues, help set advocacy priorities and build stronger relationships with manufacturers, lenders, suppliers and fellow dealers. Many leaders say the experience broadens their perspective, sharpens their strategic thinking and deepens their understanding of the forces shaping the RV marketplace. It can be an incredibly rewarding experience to give back to this industry that's been good to so many of us.

Q: How does involvement at this level help a dealer's business succeed?

Been: I've heard it repeatedly from our volunteer leaders: involvement leads to better operational decisions because you're exposed to a wider range of information and best practices than you'd ever get on your own. You also gain a clearer view of long-term trends, which help with inventory planning, staffing decisions and even facility investments. RVP

WHERE DEALERSHIP PERFORMANCE IS *Really Decided*

How leadership inside the **fixed operations departments** impacts a dealership's success.

BY MARK BOSWELL, FOUNDER & CEO, CROSSROADS OF AMERICA CONSULTING LLC

In many RV dealerships, leadership discussions tend to revolve around sales performance, inventory levels or market conditions. Those areas are certainly important. Yet when you spend time inside service departments across the country, it becomes clear that dealership performance is often decided somewhere else entirely.

It's decided inside fixed operations.

More specifically, it's determined by the leadership that exists inside the service department itself.

While owners and general managers establish the direction of the business, the day-to-day performance of fixed operations is shaped by the people responsible for running the operation every single day — service managers, service advisers, parts managers and experienced technicians.

When leadership at those levels is strong, fixed operations becomes one of the most stable and profitable areas of the dealership. When that leadership is inconsistent or absent, service departments often struggle with workflow, productivity and customer satisfaction.

Over time, the difference between those two environments becomes very visible.

Fixed Operations Runs on Daily Leadership

Anyone who has spent time inside an RV service department understands how quickly things can begin to slip if leadership is not actively present.

Technicians wait on parts. Repair orders are written without enough detail. Jobs move slowly through the shop. Customers wait longer than expected for updates.

None of these situations are unusual. Service departments are complex environments with a constant flow of work and customer expectations.

What separates high-performing service departments from struggling ones is rarely the size of the shop or the number of technicians. More often, it is whether leadership exists inside the department to manage the daily execution of work.

In strong service departments, someone is always paying attention to how the shop is operating. Workflow is monitored. Dispatch is intentional.

In weaker departments, leadership becomes reactive. Problems are addressed only after they begin affecting customers or slowing down technicians. Over time, that difference becomes very visible in the department's performance.

Service Managers Shape the Operation

The service manager is typically the most influential leader inside fixed operations.

The strongest service managers understand that their role is not simply administrative. Their responsibility is to control the operational rhythm of the department. They manage dispatch. They monitor technician productivity. They ensure repair orders are written correctly. They hold the team accountable for following process.

In many dealerships I visit, technicians are capable and motivated to produce. The challenge is not skill — it is often the lack of consistent operational leadership guiding how work moves through the shop.

When dispatch becomes reactive instead of controlled, technicians lose productive time waiting for direction or searching for the next job. When repair orders are unclear, technicians spend time interpreting problems instead of repairing them. Service managers who actively manage workflow dramatically improve the performance of the department.

The Service Adviser's Role

Service advisers also have a powerful influence on how well fixed operations performs. Advisers sit at the intersection between the customer and the shop. They control how work enters the department, how clearly the repair is documented and how expectations are communicated.

When advisers take ownership of their role, the service department runs far more efficiently. Clear repair orders help technicians begin work faster. Accurate communication improves customer satisfaction. Better coordination with parts keeps jobs moving.

In many successful dealerships, advisers understand that they are not simply writing repair orders; they are

managing the flow of work through the department.

That responsibility requires leadership, even if the title does not formally say so.

Strong advisers also understand that the service drive is one of the most important revenue points inside the dealership. The way work is presented, documented and communicated often determines whether opportunities are captured or lost.

In automotive dealerships, strong service advisers are expected to guide customers through maintenance needs, recommended repairs and long-term care of the vehicle. That same mindset is increasingly important within RV dealerships as well.

When advisers take the time to fully understand the customer's concerns, properly document the repair request and communicate clearly with technicians, the entire service process improves. Technicians spend less time seeking clarification, parts departments can anticipate needs more accurately and customers feel more confident that their concerns are being addressed.

In many cases, the adviser's leadership at the front of the service process determines how smoothly the rest of the operation performs.

Parts Departments Drive Shop Efficiency

Another leadership role that often goes unrecognized exists within the parts department.

Technicians cannot produce hours if they are constantly waiting on parts. Advisers cannot communicate timelines to customers if parts availability is uncertain.

Parts managers who view their role as operational support for the service department often become one of the most important contributors to shop productivity. When parts departments communicate effectively with service and anticipate technician needs, jobs move through the shop much more smoothly.

In dealerships where service and parts operate as true partners, the difference in productivity can be dramatic.

Experienced Technicians Influence the Culture

Leadership inside fixed operations does not stop with management.

Senior technicians frequently shape the culture of the shop through their daily actions. Younger technicians observe how they approach diagnostics, manage difficult repairs and interact with the rest of the team.

When experienced technicians demonstrate professionalism and accountability, that mindset spreads through the department. Dealerships that encourage experienced technicians to mentor newer team members often build stronger, more capable teams over time. In many ways, these technicians become informal leaders inside the shop.

Leadership Creates Accountability

At its core, leadership inside fixed operations is closely tied to accountability. Departments that perform well typically have clear ownership of responsibilities at multiple levels. Service managers monitor productivity and workflow. Service advisers take ownership of repair order quality and customer communication. Parts managers ensure technicians are supported with the components they need. Technicians take pride in completing repairs correctly and efficiently.

When those expectations are clear and consistently reinforced, fixed operations departments tend to run far more smoothly. Without that leadership structure, service departments often become reactive environments where problems are addressed only after they begin affecting customers.

Leadership & the Future of Dealership Management

Over the years, I have also seen something else that many dealerships overlook. Some of the strongest general managers I have encountered started their careers in fixed operations. Service managers and fixed operations directors often develop a deep understanding of how every area of the dealership must work together — sales, parts, service, customer experience and operational discipline. Because they manage complex workflow, people and customer expectations every day, they tend to view the dealership as a complete operational system rather than through a single departmental lens. That perspective can make them exceptionally strong dealership leaders.

Fixed Operations Performance Is a Leadership Outcome

Dealership leaders often evaluate fixed operations performance through numbers such as technician productivity, labor sales, parts margins and absorption rates. Those metrics matter, but they rarely tell the entire story. In most cases, those results are the outcome of how effectively the department is being led.

After working inside fixed operations departments across the country, one pattern becomes clear: the dealerships that perform at the highest level treat leadership inside the service department as a daily operational responsibility, not just a management title.

The difference between an average service department and a high-performing one is rarely equipment, staffing levels or market conditions. More often, it comes down to leadership — the leadership that exists inside the service department every single day.

In the dealerships where fixed operations consistently performs at a high level, leadership is not concentrated in one office. It exists throughout the department — in the service manager controlling workflow, the adviser managing the customer experience, the parts team supporting the shop and the technicians who take pride in the work leaving their bays.

When leadership exists at every level of fixed operations, the results follow. RVP

Mark Boswell is founder and CEO of Crossroads of America Consulting LLC. He has more than 30 years of experience working inside RV and marine dealership fixed operations, including on-site consulting work across dealerships nationwide. His background includes service, parts and warranty operations, with a focus on operational discipline, documentation accuracy and leadership accountability.



FAMILY BUSINESS COUNCILS

Forming a sounding board can be helpful to avoid company crises.

BY PHILLIP M. PERRY



A fifth-generation family business in Kentucky was facing a crisis. One of its four sibling owners had suddenly announced a pending divorce. The unexpected event posed a serious threat in the minds of the other brothers: Would a disgruntled ex-spouse be awarded her husband's ownership shares in the privately held corporation, ushering in an unwelcome business partner to gum up the works?

At first, a solution to the problem seemed straightforward: The company stockholder agreement required the company to buy back shares from a partner in any divorce proceedings. Alas, formal agreements are one thing and human emotions another. The divorcing brother sensed resentment on the part of his siblings: Shelling out company funds to purchase his shares might well threaten the company's growth by hampering its investments in new projects.

It was apparent that failing to resolve this issue would poison the relationship among the brothers, with serious ramifications to the bottom line. What was the solution? Later in this article we'll answer that question. For the moment, though, our story illustrates a larger problem: Personal conflicts are common and costly occurrences in family businesses.

"Any family business that gets past the first generation starts experiencing an exponential increase in the number of people affected by company operations," says Sam Brownell, founder of Stratus Business Advisors. "The organization eventually ends up dealing with a huge family with multiple branches, along with all kinds of potential claims to profits and decision-making."

Talk It Out

Many family business conflicts can be avoided — or overcome — through the efforts of a "family council" — a small group of related individuals who serve as a collective sounding board when personal issues threaten company operations. They differ from management teams and boards of directors, both of which deal with business matters and are ill-suited to handle the kind of family tensions that so often escalate into costly disruptions.

"Family councils can be good venues for airing grievances in a structured way," says Travis W. Harms, the leader



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of Mercer Capital's Family Business Advisory Services Group. "By avoiding toxic back-channel conversations between family members, they can help sidestep issues that can threaten business profits."

One common source of conflict is the company employment policy that commonly deals with some pretty sensitive issues. Here are some examples: Who among the relatives are entitled to company jobs? What are the criteria for full-time or part-time positions? Does the company create jobs for family members or just wait for positions to become available? Must successful job applicants possess certain characteristics, experiences or education?

It's not uncommon for managers to have one set of answers to the above questions, while the parents

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of a child — maybe residing several states away — will have another. "A family council can be instrumental in resolving potential conflicts as the second and third generation reaches employment age," says Barbara Dartt, a principal consultant at the Family Business Consulting Group.

Councils can also set up systems that help ensure future management continuity. "Embroiled as they are in business operations, the company's current management will not be thinking about grooming future generations for board or management positions," says Christopher J. Eckrich, a senior adviser at The Family Business Consulting Group. "But this topic can be a critical concern for a family council, which might well decide to set up educational systems to prepare future leaders."

Management Conflict

Sometimes the border between family and business is a bit fuzzy. The result can be a mismatch of goals. Take the area of risk tolerance. "Managers with incentives to grow the business rapidly may feel the best way to do so is to engage in acquisitions," Eckrich says. "However, buying other businesses often requires borrowing money, and that can be resisted by family members who want to diminish risk by maintaining a low debt to equity ratio."

In such cases, Eckrich says, it's not unusual for a family council to accommodate business goals with a compromise. "Rather than green light a huge acquisition, they may opt to take on a series of smaller ones."

Company initiatives that make sense strategically can also butt up against family values. Eckrich gives a commonly encountered example. "Maybe a board decides to close the company headquarters located in a small town where a business grew up and move operations to a larger city. But the act of closing the headquarters Grandma and Grandpa created 60 years ago can end up exploding the family," he says.

Wise boards run such sensitive initiatives by the family council for discussion and feedback, Eckrich says. A proactive approach can reduce the chances for conflict.

Resolving such issues can have a beneficial effect on company profits. "In economic terms, the family council can strengthen the emotional connection between the family members and the business operation," Dartt says. "The result is that the organization benefits from patient capital owners who are willing to leave their money in the business for long-term return."

This kind of financial loyalty can be especially important for those enterprises with family members residing in distant locations. "A council can ensure that widely separated family members understand they have a voice in decision-making and feel a sense of pride in the enterprise," Dartt says.

A council can also serve as a useful venue for family members to reach accommodations on conflicting personal



goals. “We often see situations in which some family members feel emotionally connected to the business and want it to see it continue, while others are more interested in having their money go elsewhere,” Dartt says. “Maybe they want to make an addition on their house, or put their kids through college with no debt or buy a vacation home. These wildly different priorities can tear a family apart.”

In such cases, family councils can obviate costly flare-ups by providing for the cash-out of some ownership shares while ensuring that the cash outlay does not harm the company’s future growth.



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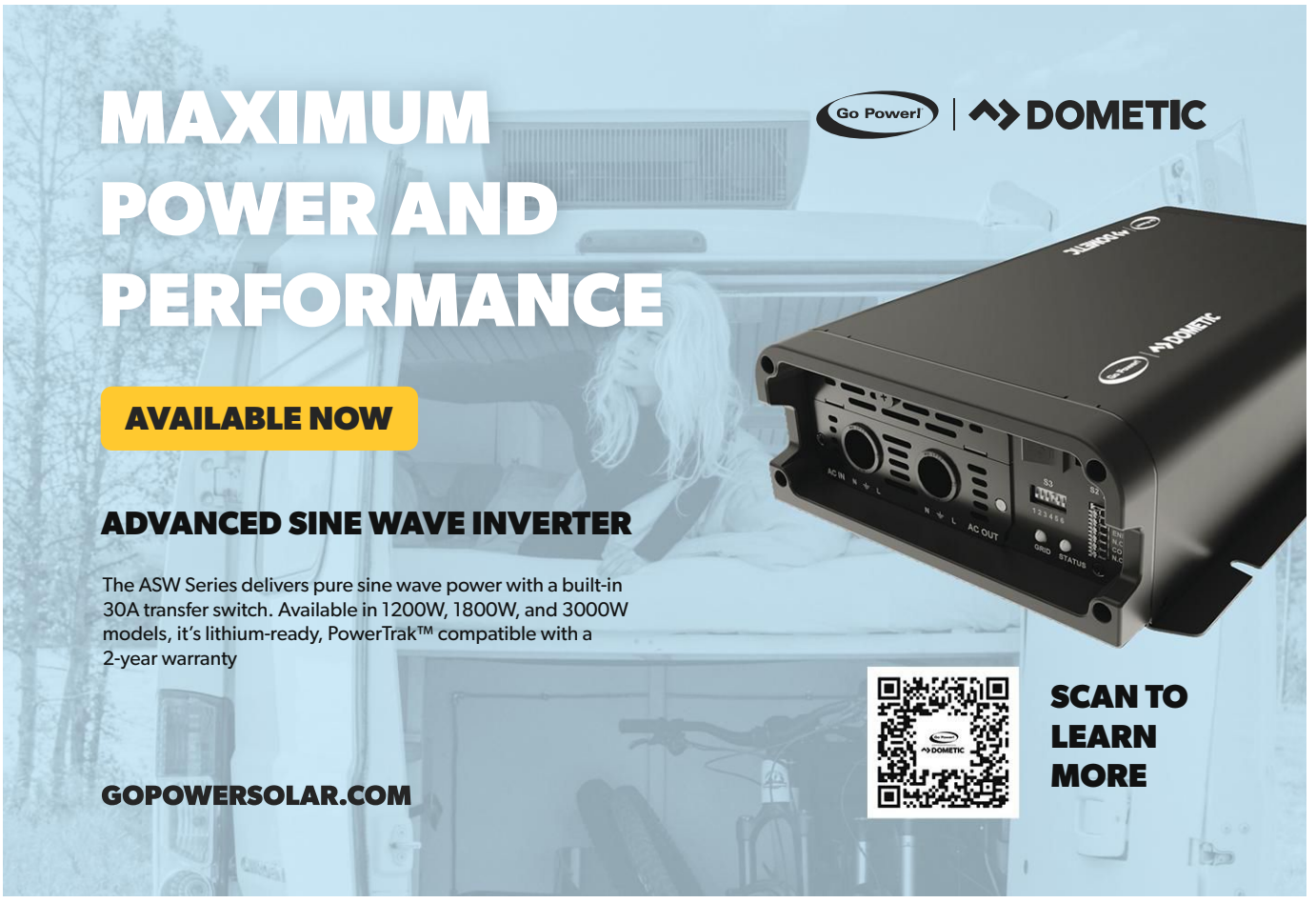
Keep It Real

Launching a successful family council requires a bit of thoughtful planning — including a decision about its composition. “Someone has to decide what categories of people will serve on the council,” Harms says. Very often, membership will be open to any family member, regardless of share ownership.

Other councils might be restricted to categories such as first-generation owners, siblings or spouses. “The emphasis should be on the first word: It’s a family council, not a business council or a board of directors,” Harms says.

Then, of course, there is the decision about which specific individuals will join the council. “In the very beginning, and often for a long time after, the composition of the family council will be segregated by family branches,” Harms says. “Each of four branches, for example, might designate two individuals.”

Yet, as family trees get more complex, branch dynamics can fracture. “It’s not healthy if branches turn into factions,” Harms says. In such cases, the company might start assigning representatives



from a larger pool of prospective family groups, including those from multiple generations and stepchildren.

How big should the council be? Large enough to be inclusive, but small enough to allow for timely decisions. The majority of councils range in size from six to 12.

"In some families where everybody may want to be on the council, keeping it to a manageable size is a challenge," Harms says. Other times, the converse is true. "Council membership can be an extremely thankless job, and if people who pour a lot of time into it feel their work is not appreciated, you can quickly run out of volunteers."

Take Action

Now let's return to the story that opened this article. A fifth-generation family business was facing the possibility that a required buy-back of a brother's ownership shares might hamper future growth. What was the solution? The company called a meeting of its family council, whose members decided to arrange for a new five-year note to fund the buyout, relieving the need to raid the company treasury.

"We were able to resolve the issue in a very collaborative way as opposed to people hiding their feelings," Brownell says. "This was a nice conclusion because everyone felt their opinions were valued, and that their colleagues were in the business for more than just themselves."

As this story suggests, family councils can help ensure the long-term success of an enterprise. If the benefits are obvious, the urgency is often unappreciated.

"The most common mistake is inertia," Brownell says. "Change is hard, and it can be difficult to have the kind of conversations that lead to the formation of a council."

Too, the very dynamics of a family council can seem counterintuitive to managers who grew up in the top-down, hierarchical nature of traditional business operations.

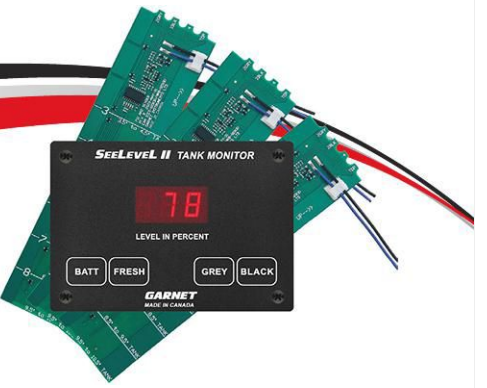
"The most common challenge is marshaling the patience for a messy, nonlinear management approach," Dartt says.

For the same reason, there can also be a temptation to underutilize the council once it is formed. Too often, companies go back to business as usual, canceling scheduled meetings and letting things fester. That very reversion to seat-of-the pants decision-making, of course, invites the very misunderstandings and resentments that a council was founded to avoid.

The good news is that an effective council need not disrupt daily operations. "Even if a council meets just once or twice a year for three or four hours, there's a lot of communication that can be done in that time frame to avoid conflict down the road," Eckrich says. "The family council can be a critical tool for spotting problems before they develop. I know managing a successful one is a challenge, but the payoff is pretty good for the folks who do it." RVP

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DO YOU HAVE AN EFFECTIVE FAMILY COUNCIL?

Will your family council adequately deal with interpersonal tensions? Find out by taking this quiz. Give yourself 10 points for each "yes" answer to these questions. Then total your points.

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- **Does the council meet on a consistent schedule?**
- **Is there specific membership criteria?**
- **Is the council kept to a manageable size?**
- **Does an educational program train future managers and board members?**
- **Has succession planning been addressed?**
- **Does your council maintain contact with the board of directors?**
- **Is business strategy left to management?**
- **Does the council reach out to distant family members?**
- **Do you regularly assess the council's effectiveness?**

What's your score? Over 80: Congratulations! Your company has gone a long way toward creating an effective family council. Between 60 and 80: The council needs a bit of polishing. Below 60: Take steps now to get your family council up to speed.

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THE DELIBERATE MANAGER: 7 STEPS TO SCHEDULING YOURSELF FOR SUCCESS

Being intentional with your time and energy can benefit both you and your team.

BY KATE ZABRISKIE

Most of us become managers because we excelled at our previous jobs, not because we had a grand vision for leadership. One day we're individual contributors, and the next we're juggling endless meetings, urgent emails and last-minute crises while trying to develop our teams in whatever slivers of time we can find. Sound familiar?

Here's the hard truth: Great management doesn't happen in the margins of your day. It requires deliberate time and attention. But here's the good news — you don't need a management degree to get it right. With a few practical steps, you can carve out the time to lead effectively and still keep your sanity.

Step 1: Figure Out Where Your Time Actually Goes

Before you can fix anything, you need to know what's broken. Start by tracking your time for one week — every single thing you do, from impromptu hallway chats to late-night email marathons. Look honestly at how much time is going toward reactive firefighting, how much is lost to email and admin work, how much of your meeting time is actually productive and how much of your day is spent in real, meaningful conversations with your team.

The results might be sobering. Many managers discover they're dedicating little to no time to actual leadership. That's OK.

This exercise isn't about guilt; it's about identifying the problem so you can fix it.

Ask yourself: *Where am I spending time that doesn't align with my priorities as a manager?*

Step 2: Block Your Calendar Like You Mean It

Once you know where your time is going, it's time to reclaim it. Treat management time as nonnegotiable, just like a critical client meeting or a project deadline. That means blocking time for weekly planning (30 to 60 minutes to review priorities and get organized), brief daily check-ins with yourself each morning, regular one-on-ones with each team member and dedicated space for team development.

One-on-ones in particular deserve a standing spot on your calendar, not just a slot you fill when something goes wrong. The same goes for team development, whether that's a workshop, a group discussion or time to share skills across the team.

Ask yourself: *Is my calendar reflecting my role as a leader, or am I letting other priorities take over?*

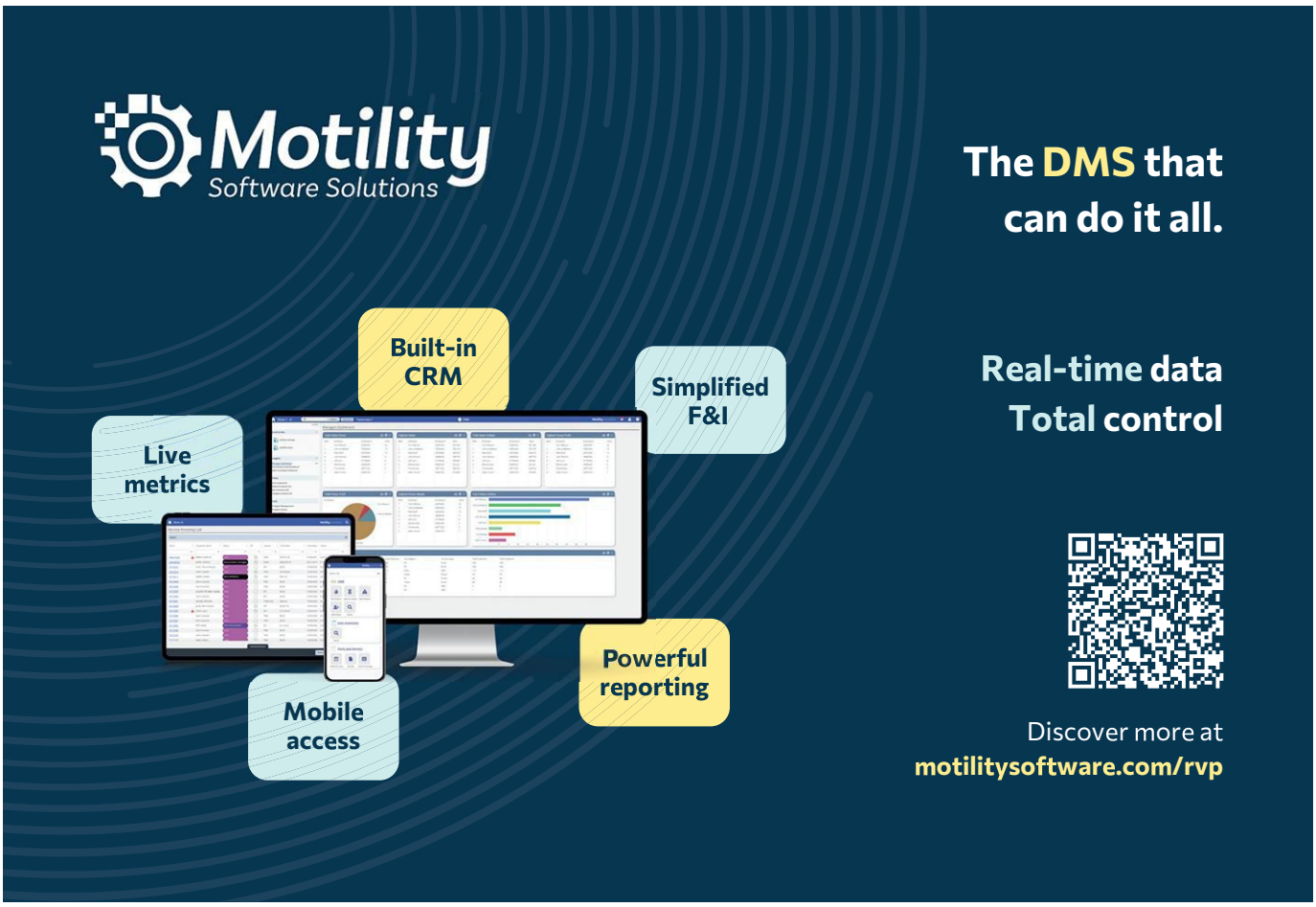
Step 3: Learn To Let Go

You can't do it all, and you shouldn't try. Delegation isn't about offloading work you don't want to do. It's about empowering your team while freeing up your own time to focus on higher-level priorities.

Before you delegate, think through a few things: What tasks are you currently doing that someone else could handle? Who on your team is ready for more responsibility? Are you providing clear instructions and expectations? And how will you check progress without micromanaging?

Done well, delegation is one of the most powerful tools in a manager's toolkit. It builds capability on your team and gives you back the time you need to lead.

Ask yourself: *Am I delegating effectively, or am I holding on to tasks my team could manage?*



Step 4: Stop Playing Whac-a-Mole With Problems

Reactive management is a time and energy drain. It's like bailing water out of a boat without plugging the leak — you stay busy but never make real progress. The antidote is proactive management: looking for patterns in recurring problems, building systems or processes to prevent issues from arising in the first place, and fostering a culture where team members feel safe raising concerns early, before they become crises.

This shift takes time to build, but it pays dividends. Every fire you prevent is time you get to spend actually leading.

Ask yourself: *Am I spending more time fixing problems or preventing them?*

Step 5: Make Development Conversations Count

Conversations about growth aren't just nice to have. They're essential for your team's success and, over time, for reducing your own workload. When your team is developing their skills, fewer fires land on your desk.

Come to one-on-ones prepared. Review recent work, know your team members' goals and ask about their aspirations and challenges. Set clear, actionable next steps and follow up on them — show that these conversations aren't just lip service. At the team level, encourage peer learning, share skills across the group and give stretch assignments that challenge people without overwhelming them.

Ask yourself: *Am I dedicating enough time to helping my team grow?*

Step 6: Guard Your Time

Your time is one of your most valuable resources, and it's your job to protect it. Let your team know when you're available and when you need uninterrupted focus time. Clearly define what counts as an emergency, set boundaries for interruptions and train your team to handle certain situations on their own.

This isn't about being inaccessible. It's about being intentional so that when you are present, you can give your full attention to what matters most.

Ask yourself: *Am I setting and enforcing boundaries that allow me to focus on high-priority work?*

Step 7: Check Your Progress Regularly

Management is a constant learning process, and regular self-assessment is essential. Schedule time to reflect on what's working, what isn't and what needs to change. Are you consistently holding to your management time? Is your team performing better? Do you feel more in control, or are you still overwhelmed? These questions don't have permanent answers — check in on them often.

The Last Idea

Becoming a better manager isn't about working more hours or saying yes to everything. It's about being intentional with your time and energy. Start small. Block time for one-on-ones. Carve out 30 minutes each week for planning. Build from there.

Your team doesn't need another firefighter. They need a leader who knows how to manage time, build trust and drive progress. The first step is deciding to be deliberate about it.

Ask yourself: *What's the first thing you're going to block time for this week?* RVP



Kate Zabriskie is the president of Business Training Works Inc., a Virginia-based talent development firm. She and her team provide on-site, virtual and online soft-skills training courses and workshops to clients in the United States and internationally. For more information, visit businesstrainingworks.com.



BY FRANK TOMS

The Buyer Who Never Existed: Synthetic Fraud in RV Sales

The integration of AI has dramatically increased the speed and realism of synthetic identity schemes.



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How often do you enter personal information online without a second thought? It's routine when opening a new account, applying for financing or completing a purchase.

What you don't see is where that information goes. Each submission feeds a growing web of digital records designed to quickly verify identity and speed up transactions. Online shortcuts simplify processes, but they also create security gaps that allow for a financial crime that is nearly impossible to detect: synthetic fraud.

For specialty dealers like you, handling high-value inventory, the stakes are high. And the first step in protecting your dealership is to increase staff awareness.

What Is Synthetic Fraud?

Synthetic fraud occurs when criminals combine genuine information with fabricated details to create an entirely new identity. Often, the foundation is a real social security number that belongs to a minor, elderly person or someone who rarely checks their credit. From there, fraudsters invent the rest: a new



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name, altered birth date and supporting documentation.

Unlike traditional identity theft, there isn't a single victim who can immediately report the crime. Synthetic fraudsters slowly establish credit, open accounts and gain credibility within financial systems. Over time, the profile appears legitimate.

These false identities are even more difficult to detect, because criminals usually don't create just one. Fraudsters often create personas in clusters, so if one is flagged as suspicious, the others can remain active for months or even years. This tactic allows criminals to easily max out credit lines or secure large loans only to disappear without a trace.

Why the Risk Is Higher Now

Synthetic fraud isn't new. When it emerged roughly two decades ago, fraudsters initially used it to open new credit accounts despite poor credit histories. Over time, however, what began as a tactic to bypass lending barriers transitioned into more severe criminal activity.

More recently, the integration of AI has dramatically increased the speed and realism of synthetic identity schemes, making the fraud even harder to detect.

Generative AI can produce convincing identification documents in seconds, while deepfake and face-swapping tools can trick biometric verification systems into confirming a person who doesn't exist. As AI tools continue to get smarter, criminals' synthetic fraud attempts will get even craftier.

When these sneaky tactics succeed, the financial consequences can be significant. United States lenders report record highs in synthetic identity activity, with billions of dollars in exposure across auto loans, credit cards and personal lending. TransUnion's H2 2024 State of Omnichannel Fraud report shows that fraud tied to synthetic identities cost lenders roughly $1.9 billion in 2021 and rose to more than $3 billion in 2024. These losses continue to climb each year.

Unique Risks for RV Dealers

Imagine it's a busy Saturday afternoon. A customer arrives ready to finance a new RV. Their credit score looks strong, the paperwork moves quickly, and within hours, they're driving off the lot.

Months later, the lender calls. No payments were ever made. The phone number is disconnected. The mailing address traces back to a rented mailbox. The social security number on file belongs to someone else. The buyer never existed.

A 700Credit industry survey revealed 30.3% of dealers reported having an RV stolen due to fake identity or synthetic fraud in 2024. Yet awareness of synthetic fraud remains surprisingly low across the industry.

Dealers who frequently offer financing are particularly vulnerable. According to Bank Info Security, 1 in every 59 auto loan applications show signs of manipulation, and RV purchases present an especially attractive opportunity for synthetic identity fraud. In the past year alone, 18.4% of dealers were forced to buy back at least one RV from a lender due to a fraudulent loan application.

Criminals can easily secure financing with a synthetic identity and drive away with a brand-new vehicle worth tens of or even hundreds of thousands of dollars, with little risk of being held accountable. But that's just the beginning.

Synthetic identities can be used for sophisticated schemes such as trading in an RV with an outstanding balance, using a synthetic identity to finance a higher value vehicle or even selling a stolen RV as part of the transaction.

One reason fraudsters target RV dealers is the continued use of lenient identification practices. More than 50% of RV dealers still rely on outdated processes, such as making paper copies of driver's licenses, taking pictures of IDs with their phones or asking customers to email identification documents to employees. These methods lack proper

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consumer data protection and create significant fraud risks.

Because of these threats, it's important to prioritize access to real-time identity and verification tools that can confirm if an ID and VIN match official state records before completing a transaction.

Early Warning Signs for Dealers

Identifying suspicious behavior before finalizing a purchase could be the difference between catching a criminal and losing thousands of dollars. Synthetic identities often leave signs during the buying process.

Pay attention to unusual buying behavior, such as little to no effort to negotiate the price on a high-value RV or a strong sense of urgency to complete a purchase quickly. Additionally, if a customer has submitted multiple credit applications to different dealerships in a short time frame, that could be a signal of criminal activity.

Suspicious credit activity can include a new credit file with a high score but minimal account history, accounts opened within a short period of time or unusual transaction patterns. Of course, when it comes to identity fraud, it's equally important to look for questionable details such as:

- Mismatched names, addresses or social security numbers that don't align with official records
- Irregular contact information, such as P.O. boxes or commercial mail-receiving services instead of residential addresses

Individually these indicators might not confirm fraud, but together, they should raise red flags.

Protection Processes

Preventing fraud shouldn't mean avoiding digital convenience or trade-in opportunities. Instead, focus on reinforcing verification and data practices in the sales process.

You can protect your dealership and reduce risk by:

- Maintaining a secure data environment
- Staying up to date with industry best practices
- Training to detect suspicious activity
- Collaborating with financial institutions and law enforcement
- Conducting background checks on potential buyers
- Implementing identity and vehicle verification processes using official record databases that provide access to real-time data

Managers in the Finance & Insurance department (F&I) shouldn't be the only ones preventing fraud. It is important to establish these safety measures to prevent fraud across all departments so as to greatly reduce exposure. Sales staff, administrative teams and leadership all play a role in recognizing the tell-tale signs of possible identity fraud early.

Stronger Data, Stronger Protection

When it comes to rapidly evolving synthetic fraud, reliable data and verification practices are essential. Find a trusted data partner that can give you access to real-time authoritative motor vehicle records and title information. This way, you can verify the legitimacy of vehicles and associated documentation before finalizing a transaction. By using accurate, up-to-date state and federally sourced title data to validate vehicles and verify documentation in real time, your dealership can reduce exposure to both identity-based and asset-based fraud. RVP

Frank Toms is Auto Data Direct's national sales director. With more than a decade of experience working with dealerships, Toms helps dealers identify synthetic fraud and implement best practices to protect their business. For more information, email info@add123.com or visit add123.com.



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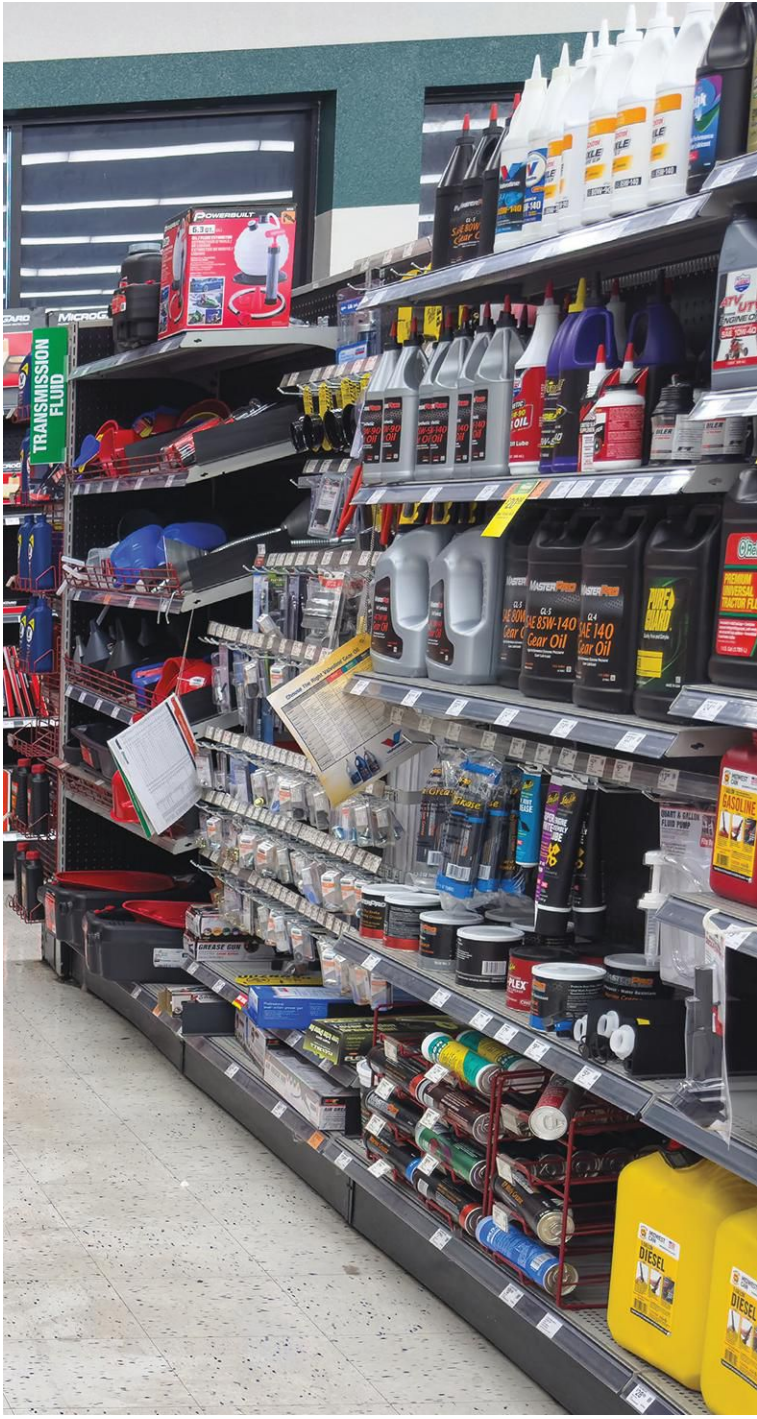


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BY MEL SELWAY

On the Level — **For Now**

These factors could affect the stock level of your parts and accessories inventories.



JAMMER GENE - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Most of your RV customers require some type of leveling system to ensure that their unit is level and secure in the various locations where they park. Each site requires different level adjustments. Likewise, your parts and accessories inventories could require adjustment to the level of goods depending on the time of year, demand and other factors. Read on to learn more about some of the factors that could impact the stock level of goods in your parts and accessories inventories.

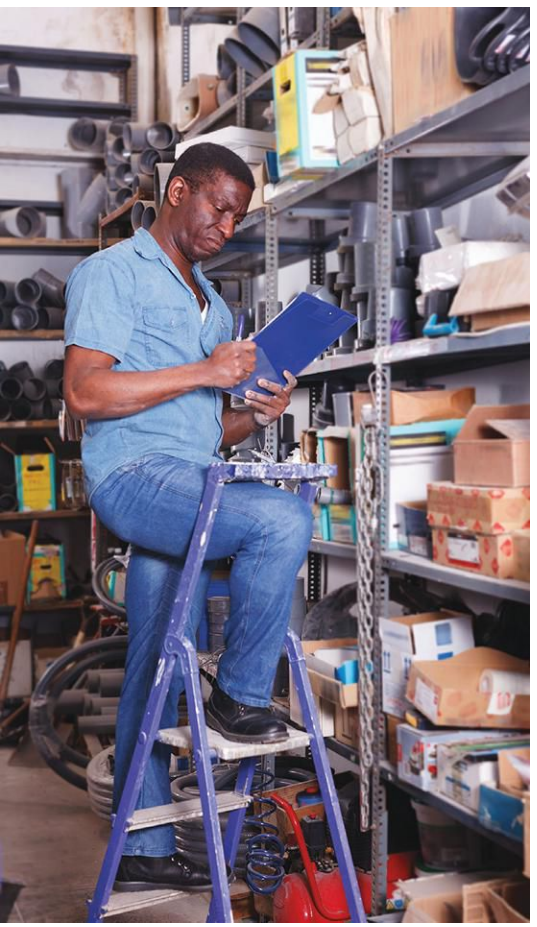
Location of Your RV Business

You might wonder why the location of your RV business might be a factor that impacts the levels of your parts and accessories inventories. If your business is close to a major travel route, the volume of RVs in your location might be different than that of an RV business that is in a seasonal vacation spot. For each of these locations, the volume of parts and accessories that are carried each month should be reflective of the demand for those parts and accessories by your customers.

Is your RV business located in a four-seasons area where weather factors could impact the volume of your parts and accessories inventories?

Let's clarify my use of volume regarding the level of your parts and accessories inventories. There are two aspects of volume that your parts and accessories manager should consider when deciding on the stock levels in her department. One volume is the total value of the entire parts and accessories inventories, which might be relatively consistent throughout the year due to the budget that has been established. On the other hand, the volume of each item in those inventories could fluctuate depending on the season.

Suppose your RV business is in an area where the winters experience substantial snowfall. Maybe your service manager has a program to contact customers to offer accessory installation specials during these winter months. If the service manager has communicated with the parts and accessories manager, then the level of certain accessories might be increased during this period. And, if this interdepartmental communication is consistent, then the parts and accessories manager might be able to take advantage of any supplier specials that might include cost discounts and/or delayed billing.



JACKF - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Another factor that is related to your location is ...

Quantity of RVs in Your Market Area

If there are a large quantity of RV owners that reside in your market area, the level of parts and accessories could reflect this because the walk-in/drive-in traffic of these RV owners might be greater at certain times of the year — especially if many of those owners are not full-timers.

Regardless of the quantity of RVs in your market area, how are you staying in touch with these RV owners? What marketing are you doing to initiate and to maintain contact with these prospective customers?

Do your parts and service managers develop special sales to attract customers, especially in months that historically report less volume of business in the fixed operations departments? And if these specials are centered on specific maintenance and/or installation jobs, have those managers estimated the approximate stock levels of the related parts and accessories and ensured that those levels are on hand during the period of the special?

Let's not forget that other inventory that could be impacted by a special sale — technician labor hours available. How many of your technicians possess the skill set to perform the maintenance or installation jobs related to the special? This is important so that your repair event cycle time (RECT) can be positively supported.

Since we are talking about ...

Interdepartmental Communications

How frequently do the managers of the unit sales, service, and parts and accessories departments communicate to coordinate the flow of business through your RV dealership?

"IT IS IMPORTANT TO DELIVER ON ANY PROMISES MADE TO A CUSTOMER SO A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP IS ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED."

And how does this impact the level of parts and accessories inventories?

If an RV is sold and this sale involves the installation of an accessory, has the unit sales agent contacted the parts and accessories manager and the service manager to ensure that each of these departments have the necessary inventory of the accessory and the labor to install that accessory? This is important to ensure that the RV can be delivered to the customer at the agreed-upon date and time. In fact, has the unit sales agent determined the availability of technician time and availability of the accessory in advance of establishing a promise date/time? It is important to deliver on any promises made to a customer so a positive relationship is established and maintained.

The next two factors that could impact the stock level of goods are related to the usage of features that are most likely offered by your dealership management system (DMS).

Stock Status Field in DMS

Another factor that could impact the stock level of goods in the parts and accessories inventory is the entry that exists in the stock status field of your DMS database. Depending on your DMS, this stock status field might be updated automatically based on the quantity of demand for an item. Or your DMS might require that the parts and accessories manager manually enter the

stock status in this field. In either case, it is important that the manager reviews this field to ensure that the correct stock status exists, especially if items are not being suggested for replenishment.

Speaking of demand, are there any ...

Demands That Might Be Lost

In this column, the word demand has been mentioned several times. A parts and accessories manager should be aware of every demand for every part and accessory that customers make for any item – whether that item is currently present in the existing inventory or not. This demand information is important so that the manager can decide if an item has achieved sufficient demand to be included in the parts and accessories inventory.

However, experiences in my 50-plus years as a parts manager/director and inventory management consultant have been that not all demand is recorded. Yes, if a sale has been recorded on a counter ticket or a work order, then the DMS considers that when calculating a stock replenishment order. Even if the item has been specially ordered for the customer, then the demand is recorded in the DMS.

But what if the actual sale is not completed? What if the customer decides not to purchase the requested item? Has the parts associate recorded a lost sale in the DMS?

Your parts and accessories manager should train her parts associates to record every demand for every item so that she can decide if the item should be included in the stocked inventory and at what level. To assist your parts personnel in deciding how to qualify a lost sale, here is my eight word definition of a lost sale: Demand, not filled from stock and not ordered.

Before closing this month's column, I feel that it is important to mention that lost sales are not only important to the parts and accessories manager at your RV business. They are also important to your service manager. If a requested job cannot be scheduled to a customer's convenience, then a service lost sale should be reported to the service manager. This is very important because it relates to the RECT in your business.

You may have noticed that RECT is a key phrase in the RV industry. In fact, the March 2026 issue of RV PRO contained several interesting columns focused on RECT.

Leveling With You

Please feel welcome to contact me if you have any questions related to this month's column because I endeavor to share my inventory management experiences and knowledge with you. And that's on the level! RVP

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SP54-182

HITCH MOUNT STABILIZER
fits any Rear 2" Hitch Receiver
Provides stability from excessive or unwanted movement



SP54-274

BIKE RACK STABILIZER
fits most 2" hitch bars
Uses ratchet tensioning design for extra stability

SPECIAL PRODUCT FOCUS

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HYDRAULIC TRAILER JACK

EQ Systems, Cassopolis, Michigan, offers its AJ Hydraulic Trailer Jack. Engineered for gooseneck, horse and motorsports trailers, the AJ Series Hydraulic Trailer Jack features an 8,000-pound capacity per leg with up to 24 inches of stroke. The 3.5-inch square tube-in-tube design incorporates a commercial single-function pump with a manual override screw drive, ensuring operation even without power. Designed, engineered, manufactured and assembled in Michigan, the system includes weatherproof single-switch gear control, high-temperature nylon braid wire harnesses and a steel pump cover.

eqsystems.us



I-BEAM MOUNT STABILIZER

MORryde, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its I-Beam Mount Stabilizer. The MORryde I-Beam Stabilizer easily slides onto your RV's I-beam, using a two-leg design and ratchet strap to reduce unwanted movement and improve overall stability. It features quick, no-drill installation and is adjustable for multiple height settings, and is engineered for enhanced side-to-side support. Install it at the front or rear of your trailer, or add one to both for enhanced stability.

morryde.com

STABILIZATION SYSTEM

Camco, Greensboro, North Carolina, presents its FasTen Stabilization System. Featuring Stabilizer Jack Pads (44540, 44565), Big Blocks (44539) and 2x2 Leveling Blocks (21022), FasTen ensures secure, level support on any terrain. Built for compatibility and durability, these USA-made products work together to simplify setup and enhance stability.

camco.net





TRUCK CAMPER STABILIZING SYSTEM

Torklift International, Kent, Washington, offers its FastGun Wobble Stopper, a stabilizing system for truck campers when they are offloaded and supported by their jacks. It connects the front camper jack legs to the camper body, creating a brace that reduces movement and sway. The system installs with a lever-action handle for quick attachment and removal. It is available for round or square jack applications and is constructed from stainless steel and aluminum for durability.

torklift.com



ELECTRIC JACK

Rieco-Titan Products, Frankfort, Illinois, presents its Electric Jack. Raise, lower and level your truck camper at the touch of a button with Electric Jacks. Engineered for long life and trouble-free operation, its heavy-duty construction is rated for 2,500-pound capacity per jack. They feature a 36-inch-plus lift along with a head that swivels 360 degrees for ease of installation. The extra-large footpad creates added stability.

riecotitan.com



STABILIZING JACK

Seaflo Marine & RV North America, South Bend, Indiana, offers its SEAFLO 12V High-Speed Electrical Powered Stabilizing Jack. Engineered for maximum stability and durability, this stabilizing jack offers 4,000 pounds of static load support for RVs, trailers and fifth wheels. With dual independent motors, it delivers precise leveling control. Its reinforced wide-leg base and triangular support arm design ensure stability, while the heavy-duty powder-coated steel construction resists rust, corrosion and harsh outdoor conditions. Featuring waterproof IP-rated motors, switches and reset breakers, this stabilizer performs reliably in all environments. Offers up to 25 inches of lift with one-touch operation.

seaflodirect.com



STABILIZING BLOCK

Weigh Safe Trailer Hitches, Vineyard, Utah, presents its Flap Jack Block, a compact, foldable solution designed to replace bulky jack blocks and simplify setup. Using built-in magnets for quick alignment, it creates a stable, level base for trailers and equipment in seconds — no stacking required. Just place it under your jack and lower. When you're done, it folds down for easy storage. Rated to support up to 6,000 pounds, it's built for reliable, everyday performance.

weigh-safe.com



TRUCK CAMPER JACK PADS

RV SnapPad, Calgary, Alberta, offers its SnapJack TC. The SnapJack TC is an adapter kit for truck camper stabilizers that makes setup faster, easier and more convenient. Compatible with LCI HappiJac systems, it replaces standard feet with larger rubber-padded bases that increase grip on any surface, reduce sinkage and minimize movement. Designed to last a lifetime, it protects your investment by reducing the risks and costs of improper setup.

rvsnappad.com





FIFTH WHEEL STABILIZER SYSTEM

Ultra-Fab Products, Elkhart, Indiana, offers its Landing Gear. Raises and supports up to 12,000 pounds with ease. Hit the switch and let the landing gear do the heavy lifting. Oversize 8-by-5-inch footpads stop sinking and wobble, while independent legs free up storage and keep things level on uneven ground. Internal clutch protects against overextension. Includes a six-year warranty.

ultra-fab.com



LEVELING CHOCKS

Valterra, Mission Hills, California, presents its Stay Put Curved Leveler. Valterra's Stay Put family of RV chocks and blocks gives owners everything they need to keep their rig level, stable and secure. The Stay Put Curved Levelers make dialing in precise leveling simple while helping prevent roll-offs. They deliver confidence, convenience and dependable performance — so RVers can focus less on setup and more on the journey.

valterra.com





ELECTRIC TONGUE JACKS

Stromberg Carlson, Traverse City, Michigan, offers its Electric Tongue Jacks. Stromberg's electric tongue jacks are available in capacities from 2,500 to 5,000 pounds. The JET-2500 supports lightweight trailers pulled by smaller tow vehicles. The JET-3555 (white) and JET-3755 (black) tongue jacks support trailers using weight distribution hitches pulled by SUVs or lightweight trucks. The JET-4500 uses half the power of other jacks and features ball screw technology. The JET-4500 and JET-5000 are great for large, heavy-load trailers pulled by tow vehicles with stiff suspensions that cause more resistance when setting weight distribution bars.

strombergcarlson.com







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Pit Stop



The *Quintessential* Outdoor Leader

When it comes to outdoor-adjacent industries, the skill set required for leadership is ever-evolving. Early leaders in outdoor markets were epitomized by **resilience, resourcefulness and a profound connection with nature.** These were individuals who not only knew how to survive, but to thrive in the wilderness. Today's marketplace prioritizes more characteristics that make the "quintessential outdoor leader":

1. Sustainability Expertise
   - Understanding environmental impact & the industry's impact on ecosystems
   - Advocating for eco-friendly solutions
   - Integrating sustainability into business strategy — sourcing, waste reduction, etc.
2. Digital Literacy
   - Embracing tech for customer engagement — developing user-friendly digital platforms
   - Data analytics for decision-making
   - Staying ahead of digital marketing trends for effective brand promotion
3. Creating Experiential Connections
   - Understanding consumer behavior, preferences & trends
   - Leveraging social media for community building
   - Developing community-centered experiences
4. Flexibility & Adaptability
   - Responding to market changes, from consumer trends to environmental conditions
   - Embracing change as an opportunity
5. Building Strong Networks
   - Fostering collaboration — the era of the "lone wolf" leader is over
   - Creating diverse partnerships — understanding different perspectives & finding common ground among shared goals

Sources: Cutwater Martin

MARCH 2026 SHIPMENTS

32,162 (units)
total RV shipments

13.9% decrease
compared to March 2025 (37,348 units)

For the year, shipments are off 12.1% with 86,051 units shipped to-date

Towable RVs, led by conventional travel trailers, ended the month down (-16.2%) from last March with 28,484 shipments. Motorhomes finished the month up 9.3% compared to the same month last year with 3,678 units.

Park model RVs finished March up 33.6% compared to the same month last year, with 489 wholesale shipments.

HEADING FOR HIGHER GROUND

"From the Dolomites to Annapurna to the Canadian Rockies, alpine escapes worldwide are luring people year-round for off-peak peace."

Go RVing took a deep dive into a recent **Skyscanner Report,** seeking actionable opportunities for RV brands to integrate into their marketing campaigns.

- Skyscanner said it has seen **hotel bookings increase 103% globally** year over year using its "Room with a mountain view" filter.
- Go RVing said RV brands should highlight **feature amenities that support higher altitude experiences** such as solar panels, heating/cooling, wind-resistant features, etc.
- Other popular amenities to promote include features that offer **big mountain views** like large windows, patios and outside kitchens.

Two equal financial contributions have been made by **Forest River** and the **Peter J. Liegl Family Foundation** to support the development of a new facility at the Elkhart 4-H County Fairgrounds, bringing together agriculture, community and the RV industry in a way that reflects both the region's roots as the "RV Capital of the World" and its future.

Officially named the **Forest River Inc. and Peter J. Liegl Ag and Community Expo,** the new facility is the result of years of planning and a growing need for space to better serve local families, youth programs and large-scale events. Groundbreaking is expected to follow this year's fair, advancing a concept more than a decade in the making, the organizations said.



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