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LIPPERT



Jordan Benschop
Senior Managing Editor

It turns out, you can fit a surprising number of "existential questions into a van. I learned this in August on my first Class B trip to Telluride, Colorado, dubbed my home state's "Switzerland" for its towering San Juan Mountain Range — where my fiancé, Matt, spent 25 hours running a 65-mile race (yep, you read that right). Not exactly the leisurely getaway I was expecting. Crewing an ultramarathon for a runner climbing 22,500 feet of elevation put "remote work" in a different light.

Our weekend home on wheels, a 2021 Ford Transit rented from Outdoorsy and packed with enough gear, food and backup plans to form a tiny command center, gave us front-row seats to the lifestyle I've only reported on at RV PRO. And boy, does coffee taste extra good off-grid.

Somewhere between prerace nerves, the van-accessible aid stations and 12 hours on the road, I found myself thinking about why RVing works so well in places like this: It brings us closer to the "why." For Matt, it was never about winning medals; it was about pushing boundaries and having an extraordinary experience in the great outdoors.

I thought about how much we ask of the places we travel to — and how much we owe them in return. That question feels particularly relevant right now, as our public lands and national parks face a complicated future.

As of when this letter was written, the 110-year-old National Park Service (NPS) is grappling with significant staffing and funding challenges amid cuts to the agency. Protections have been largely reduced for national monuments like Arizona's Grand Staircase-Escalante and Utah's Bears Ears — both with stories spanning eons — the latter recently seeing 91% of its protected area stripped.

More recently, controversy over a proposed land exchange near Yosemite National Park raised concerns about the possibility of private development and access to federally protected land.

Acres of roadless national forest land, home to thriving ecosystems, are being threatened by the millions. A recent fact I learned about those ecosystems: According to NPS estimates, 80%-90% of wildlife species living within national parks are undiscovered by science.

So whatever your politics, the bigger question is worth asking: **What do we believe public lands are for?**

In the RV industry, the answer should matter to all of us. Our businesses are built around the idea that there's always something worth driving toward — we manufacture what gets people there and sell them the equipment to stay. Public lands are part of the RV lifestyle's infrastructure.

And maybe that's why our little Class B adventure stuck with me. When you spend a weekend living out of a van, you realize how little you truly need to feel at home: a bed, a hot meal, someone you love and a place worth waking up for.

Our public lands belong to all of us — to the family trying something new, to the runner seeking a trail to humble them and, equally as important, to the people who haven't discovered them yet. The RV industry has a vested interest in protecting that notion. Because the best part of RVing is where the vehicle can take you — so let's make sure those places are still there when we arrive.

Jordan Benschop



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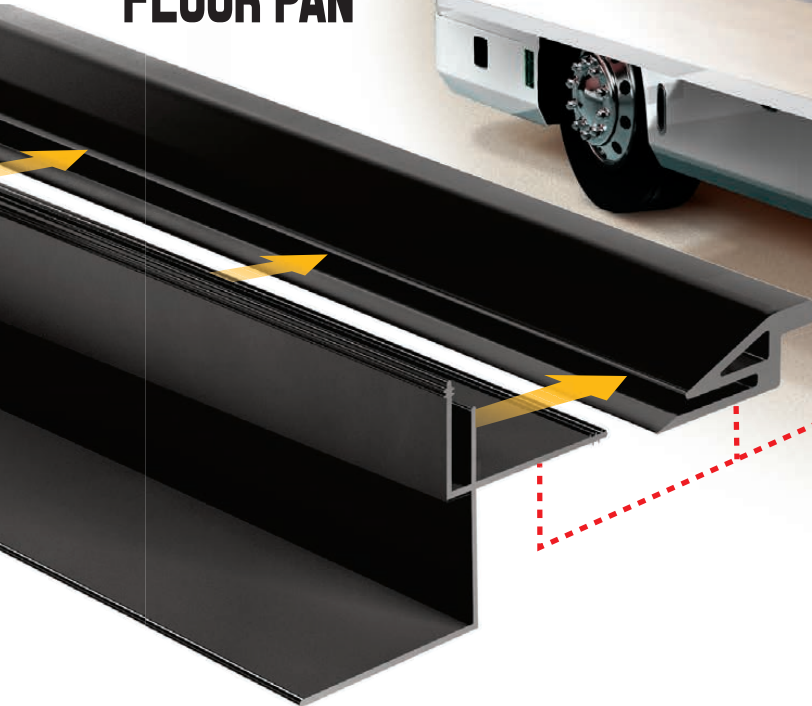


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HIRES & PROMOTIONS



◀ **Jason Lippert** **Fun Town RV**

Fun Town RV named Jason Lippert as its CEO in August. Current Founder and CEO Jarrod McGhee will move to the role of founder/chairman of Fun Town RV. Lippert joins Fun Town RV following a 32-year career with LCI Industries, where he started on the manufacturing floor.



◀ **Destiny Rounsavall** **RVTAA & NRVA**

RV Technicians Association of America (RVTAA) and the National RV Inspectors Association (NRVA) have appointed Destiny Rounsavall as member services and partnership coordinator for both organizations. Rounsavall will oversee member service initiatives and coordinate strategic partnerships with organizations that support the RV industry.



◀ **Patrick Smith** **Grote Industries**

Grote Industries has appointed Patrick Smith as vice president of North American operations in Madison, Indiana, and a member of the company's executive leadership team. Smith will bring his decades of expertise and a solutions-focused viewpoint to Grote's management team, with an emphasis on operational excellence, continuous improvement and talent development.



◀ **Bryon Dorr** **Overland Expo**

Overland Expo has appointed Bryon Dorr as senior content and brand strategist, a newly established leadership role. Dorr will lead strategic initiatives that support continued growth across Overland Expo's events, media platforms, community engagement efforts and brand partnerships. A key focus of Dorr's work will be helping Overland Expo deepen its connection with both its core audience and adjacent adventure communities.



◀ **Scott Fontaine** **Black Book**

Black Book has appointed Scott Fontaine as vice president and head of residual strategy. In this newly created executive leadership role, Fontaine will report to Black Book President Jared Kalfus and lead the company's residual value modeling and predictive valuation strategy across the U.S. and Canada. Fontaine brings more than 25 years of experience spanning automotive finance, residual setting, vehicle valuations, remarketing, credit risk and quantitative modeling.

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

Blue Compass RV announced the acquisition of **Brown's RV Superstore** in South Carolina. The store will now be recognized as Blue Compass RV Columbia Northeast and gives Blue Compass 13 dealerships in the Carolinas.

Heavy Equipment Colleges of America (HEC) has acquired the **National RV Training Academy** (NRVTA). NRVTA will become a part of HEC's growing trade education portfolio, extending its footprint into RV service, maintenance and technical training as demand continues to rise alongside the growth of outdoor recreation and mobile living across the U.S.

SUPPLIERS & AFTERMARKET

Airxcel held its 13th annual New Product Showcase in August at its newly renovated showroom in Elkhart, Indiana, offering attendees with a first look at new products and technology enhancements. "Across our portfolio, we're investing in product innovations that help manufacturers create RVs that are smarter, more comfortable and better aligned with the needs of today's travelers," said Anthony Wollschlager, president and CEO of Airxcel.

Dragonfly Energy Holdings Corp. announced a strategic partnership with Sphere Energy to develop and integrate AI capabilities into its future battery technologies and integrated power systems. **Sphere Energy's** proprietary battery AI models will be integrated into Dragonfly Energy's next-generation battery management system architecture.

Want more?



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EVENTS

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Oct. 14-16

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accelevts.com/e/2026-rv-component-expo

RVWA Educational Symposium

Oct. 15-16

Chicago, IL

rvwa.org/events/educational-symposium

Las Vegas Marine & RV Dealer Trade Show

Oct. 21-22

Las Vegas, NV

insdistributionevents.com

Overland Expo East

Oct. 23-25

Arrington, VA

overlandexpo.com/east

2026 Keller Marine & RV East Coast Show

Nov. 2-3

Palmetto, FL

kellermarine.com

Marine & RV Dealer Virtual Trade Show

Nov. 6

insdistributionevents.com

Outdoor Hospitality Conference & Expo

Nov. 9-11

Fort Worth, TX

ohi.org/event/ohce

RV Dealers Convention & Expo

Nov. 9-13

Las Vegas, NV

rvda.org/convention

WEBINARS

More Than Getting Paid:

The Role of Payments in the Modern RV Dealership

Oct. 8 | 1 p.m. CT

Sponsored by Lightspeed

Beyond the Website:

The Connected Showroom

Oct. 22 | 1 p.m. CT

Sponsored by Coast Technology



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RV MANUFACTURING

In August, **Winnebago Industries** announced targeted manufacturing adjustments across two of its RV brands. The Winnebago brand's towable RV production operations were slated for relocation to the nearby production campus where Grand Design RV products are currently manufactured in Middlebury, Indiana. Separately, the Winnebago motorhome business is relocating production of its Class B product line from Lake Mills, Iowa, to its primary manufacturing facility in Forest City, Iowa, bringing key manufacturing functions together in a single complex and strengthening coordination across the business.

Tiger Adventure Vehicles showcased its all-new Panthera 200 at Overland Expo Mountain West. The four-season Panthera 200, built on the F-350 single or extended cab platform, features Tiger's open galley layout with an overhead full bed and stargazing skylight, a lounging couch that converts to a full bed, fully enclosed redesigned wet bath and Tiger's signature large pass-through to the truck.



Nearly 400 dealers and personnel attended **Jayco's** 2026 Dealer Homecoming Event held in August in Las Vegas at the Venetian Resort Convention & Expo Center. During the event, tenured Jayco dealers of 20, 25, 30, 40 and 50 years were recognized and presented commemorative clocks in varying size. Jayco also celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Jay Flight model. For a list of dealers honored during Jayco's Homecoming, visit bit.ly/4cKKe7l.

In August, **Sunset Park RV** welcomed owners back to Shipshewana North Campground in Indiana for its 4th Annual Owner Rally, bringing together familiar faces, first-time attendees, employees and industry partners. "The trailers may be what brings everyone here, but the people are what make this weekend special," said Bob Fish, chief administrative officer of Sunset Park RV.

Gulf Stream Coach welcomed over 600 employees and family members to a company picnic, held Aug. 15 at the Gulf Stream Country Club, adjacent to the company's northern Indiana manufacturing campus. "At Gulf Stream, we understand that everything we accomplish is the direct result of the work our teams put in," said Phil Sarvari, president of Gulf Stream Coach. "What they accomplished over the past year has been particularly remarkable. This picnic is our way of bringing everyone together and saying thank you."

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

During the 2026 Aftermarket Conference, **Cathy Sutton** of Tom Manning & Associates and **John Hawkins** of BAL RV Products were the awarded the 2026 RV Aftermarket Lifetime Achievement Award. To see other Aftermarket Award recipients, visit bit.ly/3UmjGmy.



American Technology Components Inc. received the Fairbanks Award from the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce Business Recognition Council, recognizing the company's new facility at 1147 N. Michigan St., Elkhart, Indiana, and its contribution to the appearance and continued development of the local business community.

The RV Dealers Association (RVDA) of Canada, in partnership with NTP-STAG Canada, announced **Mark Passmore** as the top recipient of the 2025-2026 NTP-STAG Canada RV Technician Bursary. Passmore, a dedicated third-year apprentice at Jerry's RV, was selected for his commitment to professional growth, hands-on excellence and passion for the Canadian RV industry.





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THE CASE FOR KEEPING IT SIMPLE

All Good Equipment Co. is betting that smaller, lighter and less complicated can deliver a better camping experience.

BY RONNIE WENDT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALL GOOD EQUIPMENT CO.



Matthew Bettman never intended to start an RV company.

About a decade ago, the industrial designer sought a camper for himself and his family. So after spending his workdays designing products for other people, he came home and began designing one for himself.

For roughly two years, the project was mostly a design exercise. Eventually, Bettman reached the point where the only thing left to do was build it. The first teardrop trailer came together in his garage about 10 years ago — a passion project turned foundation for All Good Equipment Co., now a San Carlos, California-based teardrop trailer manufacturer that Bettman formally launched about 2 1/2 years ago. Today, he and his brother-in-law, Matt Shivers, build the trailers themselves. Yet the idea that guided his first trailer is unchanged.

Bettman wanted something small, durable and uncomplicated to steal away for a long weekend or occasionally spend a week on the road. He wasn't trying to recreate a home in the woods or prepare for a month off-grid.

"But what I wanted didn't exist," he says. "I just wanted to go camping. I wanted something as simple as a Coleman stove."

That philosophy became the bedrock of All Good Equipment Co.'s "radically practical" design.

Radically Practical

Practicality isn't synonymous with bare bones or cheap. Bettman says it embodies being honest about how a product will be used.

It's an idea influenced partly by his experience living aboard several boats in varying states of repair. Sailing was ostensibly the point, he says, but maintaining the boats could consume as much time as enjoying them. He didn't want camping to become the same thing.

Bettman also works in the Bay Area technology world, where he has designed products involving cutting-edge technology and medical applications. He appreciates what technology can do, but he also understands the complexity it can introduce. So when he designed his teardrop, he set up some rules.

"No circuit boards, no visible LED indicators, nothing where the trailer itself screams for my attention while I'm



trying to focus on the woods," he says.

That reasoning also explains why All Good Equipment doesn't chase feature counts. Bettman says it's easy to look through a product catalog and imagine that more features will make for a better experience, but those features often reflect an aspirational version of camping rather than how people actually camp.

"Being radically practical means sitting down with yourself and saying, 'I'm going to be honest, and ask, 'What do I really need?'" he says. "My response focused on connection to nature, durability and longevity."

The result is a camper Bettman describes as a "little practical life support system," offering enough comfort and security to make camping easier without becoming the experience itself.

That distinction is important. An RV with a living room, indoor kitchen and an array of switches and controls, he reasons, might tempt him to stay inside, but a teardrop pushes the experience outside.

Built To Go, Built To Last

Simple doesn't mean lightly engineered. In fact, Bettman's determination to remove unnecessary complexity made the teardrop's materials and construction even more important.

"When I built this for myself, I wanted it to last forever. So I went and sourced the best possible materials," he says.

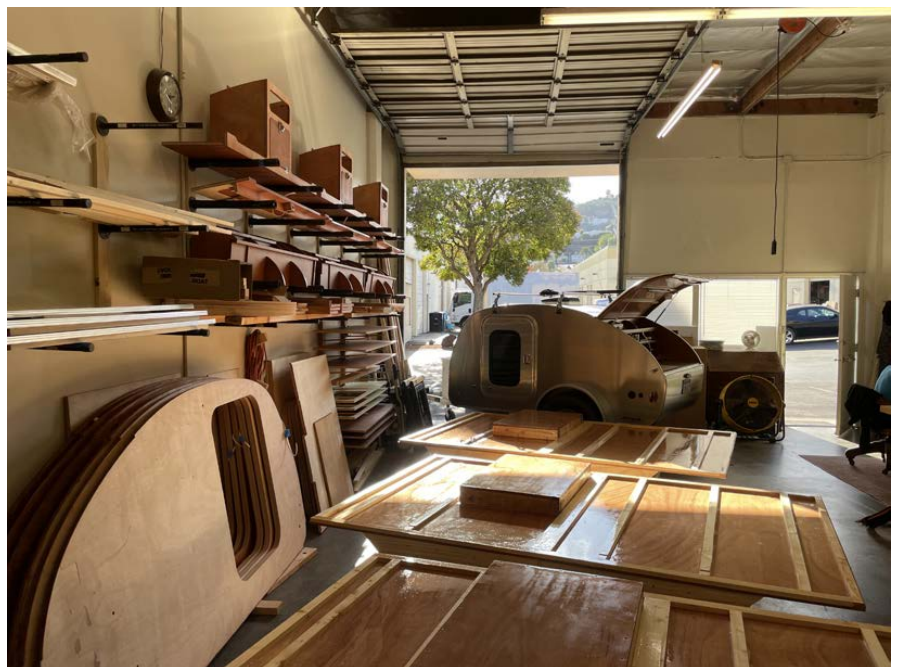
One of those is BS 1088-grade okoume marine plywood, a material used in custom yacht building. Bettman selected it for its strength-to-weight ratio and ability to withstand camping's abuse. He estimates it is about 30% lighter per panel than Baltic Birch plywood, which keeps trailer weight down without abandoning wood construction.

It also delivers the aesthetic Bettman wanted. The darker wood and its mahogany-like grain create an interior palette inspired by the warm browns and greens of the forest.

On the exterior, All Good Equipment uses unpainted aluminum cladding,

which supports longevity. There is no paint to fade and no decal package to peel. Bettman points to vintage aluminum-clad teardrops from the 1940s, '50s and '60s that remain on the road as evidence of the material's staying power.

The company also insulates the walls and ceiling with raw sheep's wool, which Bettman says helps manage moisture



and condensation and reduces manufacturing waste. The material is also biodegradable.

The emphasis on natural materials is deliberate. Bettman's years around boats left him keenly aware of what happens to fiberglass and other plastics after their useful life ends. Despite plastic's utility, Bettman wonders if it's essential for every recreational item to be made from substances that take a millennium to decompose after disposal. He prefers to use materials that can age gracefully.

Bettman references wabi-sabi, the Japanese aesthetic that finds beauty in simplicity, imperfection and the signs objects acquire through use. His family's own prototype, now about eight years old, carries bumps and marks from years of camping, including reminders of adventures with his children.

"It's almost a record of our exploits in the woods," he says.

Quality Up Close

All Good Equipment teardrops for 2027 start at \$24,500 and weigh 1,080 pounds dry, with a tongue weight of approximately 110 pounds. Their compact dimensions allow the trailers to fit in a garage stall, and their light weight opens towing to a broader range of vehicles.

That was intentional from the beginning. Bettman designed the

first trailer to pull behind his 1971 Volkswagen bus. Since then, he has seen All Good Equipment teardrops pulled by older Toyota pickups to a Toyota Prius. The lightweight, low-drag design also makes the trailer attractive to EV owners.

Bettman says the trailer's details surprise people most.

"This trailer may not have all the bells and whistles, but it's got a really good bell and a really good whistle," he says.

Bettman argues that compromises become clear the closer someone examines a mass-produced product. Fasteners, joints, materials and other details can reveal decisions made to save money or speed production. He wants an All Good Equipment teardrop to produce the opposite reaction.

"The closer you get and the deeper you look, the more you're rewarded that the quality is throughout," he says.

For now, maintaining that quality is intensely personal. Bettman and his brother-in-law build every trailer.

"The person who designed the trailer and has been camping in them for over a decade is also the person who assembles the trailers," Bettman says.

He acknowledges that may change as the company grows but says he intends to remain heavily involved in manufacturing.

"As the owner, I get to not cut corners," he says. "Honestly, that's a great privilege, and it's a matter of pride for us."

Designed Around the Campsite

All Good Equipment designs trailers for beyond the campsite, according to Bettman.

Consider the galley: Bettman initially contemplated building the cooler and stove directly into the trailer, as many teardrop manufacturers do. Camping in California bear country changed his thinking. At destinations such as Yosemite and South Lake Tahoe, food must be kept in a bear box or secured elsewhere.

Making the cooler and cooking equipment portable solved the bear issue, but Bettman discovered another benefit. Campers can move the cooler, stove and other equipment wherever the gathering happens.

"You're not beholden to the trailer," he says. "It doesn't become the epicenter of your experience."

Rather than adding heating and air conditioning equipment, Bettman put greater emphasis on insulating the structure itself. California provided an ideal proving ground, with conditions ranging from freezing temperatures in the Sierra Nevada to Central Valley heat, coastal weather, rain and sun.

A freestanding, adjustable table is also included with every trailer to serve as an extension of the galley counter, a coffee table near the campfire or



wherever it's needed. When not in use, it stores beneath the mattress.

Going Smaller

Bettman sees former owners of larger RVs and converted vans discover they don't use all the space and features they once thought they needed. He also sees former backpackers, who already understand the value of carrying less, now want a comfortable bed and greater weather protection.

The trailer's minimal weight and reduced air resistance make it an appealing choice for EV owners as well. Then there are people new to camping who appreciate the security of a hard-sided shelter.

Bettman believes those groups converge around a broader desire for simplicity.

"Consumers already live with extraordinary levels of technology and complexity," he says. "Camping can offer an escape from that."

For some, a teardrop provides enough comfort to make that escape approachable without importing all the complexity they're trying to leave behind.

"There's a security aspect to it that new campers appreciate," he says. "There's a simplicity aspect to it that old RVers appreciate, and there's a practicality that old backpackers appreciate."

Seeing people encounter the trailers in person has reinforced that belief.

At All Good Equipment open houses and trade show appearances, Bettman watches visitors peer inside, climb onto the queen-size bed and investigate how much functionality fits into such a small footprint.

"It's really fun to watch people's eyes light up as they think about the possibilities," he says.

Built To Order

All Good Equipment Co. currently offers two teardrop configurations: the Pacific and the Sierra.

The Pacific rides on conventional car/trailer-style tires, while the Sierra adds knobby tires, increased suspension height and protective light guards for



a more rugged setup. Customers can also discuss changes such as externally mounted propane, added battery capacity and electrical upgrades. All trailers can be charged via solar panels.

Because each trailer is built to order, Bettman talks with buyers about how and where they camp before finalizing the configuration. That flexibility has limits. The design exists in CAD, and its components are CNC-cut, and Bettman is reluctant to make structural changes that could compromise a design already proven.

But the company's small size also gives it agility. "If somebody has an idea, we're all yours," he says.

Bettman says the company builds about one trailer per month, generally producing them in three-unit batches. Depending on where an order falls in

the production cycle, buyers may wait roughly three to six months. Bettman isn't rushing to change that. He says the company is still finding its footing, introducing its product to the Bay Area and beyond, and learning what it means to turn a personal design project into a manufacturing company.

The operation remains a family affair, with Bettman, his brother-in-law, their wives and occasionally their children pitching in.

Eventually, demand may force a decision about expansion, but Bettman says growth for growth's sake isn't the goal.

"We want to be able to maintain the quality. We want to have pride in every trailer we make," he says. "We're going to focus on giving the people who want our trailer the best trailer we can." **RVB**

ALL IN ONE PLACE

Smart RV systems can help technicians and end users alike, keep everything centralized and simplify troubleshooting.

BY MICHELE MOORE, RV PRO MANAGING EDITOR

As technology advances, so does its adoption in our vehicles — including RVs. More and more models are featuring smart RV technology, enabling end users to have greater awareness into the various systems housed inside their RV. To learn more about smart RV systems and what dealers need to educate their customers on, RV PRO spoke with five industry experts.

Tell us about your smart RV technology and products.



Dan Birkbeck, technical sales manager, Trek Systems:

[trekMount is an] all-in-one modular mounting bracket specifically for Victron Energy systems. It consolidates the inverter/charger, MPPT solar charger, DC-DC charger, Lynx Distributor, Cerbo GX and more

onto a single pre-drilled bracket with built-in cable management and active cooling. It comes in two versions: trekMount Solo, a bracket for builders who want to wire the system themselves on a bench, and trekMount Ready, a fully prewired, preprogrammed and tested plug-and-play system assembled by our team in Denver, Colorado. We're continuing to expand compatibility; an AC/DC version is already available that incorporates AC and DC distribution.



Mike Butler, vice president of sales, Firefly Integrations:

We focus on building unified smart RV systems that bring scattered controls into one straightforward interface. Our standard platform centralizes over 55 different onboard components, including HVAC, awnings, lighting, smart batteries and inverters, on central touch screens.

Users can manage everything from the main panel, wireless wall switches or through our RV+ mobile app. We are also expanding into more entry-level RVs with our Firefly Spark. Spark gives manufacturers a production-ready smart RV platform designed specifically for mid-tier floorplans. It

removes the need for custom engineering, which helps brands add smart RV systems across more of their lineup without the complexity or cost of full-custom systems.



Jeff Gray, director, recreation division, ASA Electronics:

Our TPMS platform is engineered specifically for the RV and towable industries, delivering continuous monitoring of both tire pressure and internal tire temperature to

identify developing issues before they become costly failures or safety concerns. By monitoring pressure trends, rapid and slow air loss, abnormal temperatures and sensor communication, the system gives RV owners greater awareness of what is happening at every tire, not just when a warning light appears. What sets Voyager apart is flexibility. Rather than forcing OEMs into a single closed ecosystem, our platform allows manufacturers to choose the sensor and monitoring solution that best fits their product and their customers. Whether information is displayed through a dedicated in-cab monitor, the vehicle's existing display, a smartphone or an analog USB receiver, every solution is built on the same TPMS platform.



Hannah Corn, vice president of marketing, Lippert:

At Lippert, our approach to smart RV technology is centered on creating a more connected, safer and easier RV experience. Rather than focusing on a single product, we've developed an ecosystem of connected solutions

that help RV owners monitor, control and protect their RVs from anywhere. At the heart of that ecosystem is OneControl, Lippert's smart RV platform. OneControl allows RV owners to manage multiple coach functions from a mobile device, including lighting, awnings, slideouts, leveling systems, thermostats and other compatible components. The goal is to simplify RV ownership by bringing numerous controls into a single interface. While several Lippert technologies can integrate with OneControl, many of our



smart RV products are also designed to operate as standalone solutions. Some products work within a connected ecosystem, while others provide dedicated safety, control or monitoring functionality independent of a central smart RV platform. Beyond OneControl, Lippert offers a variety of smart and connected technologies, including Tire Linc tire pressure monitoring system (TPMS), Bluetooth-enabled keyless RV door locks, propane tank sensors, temperature sensors, and Furion Vision S camera systems. That portfolio extends beyond connected RV controls and includes advanced towing safety technologies, such as Lippert trailer ABS.



Matt Brady, product manager, Dexter:

DEX360 Smart Trailer is an advanced RV technology platform designed to make trailer ownership smarter, safer and more connected. Key features include TPMS and tire temperature monitoring for real-time tire health, battery monitoring to keep track of power status, a virtual odometer for trailer mileage, GPS tracking for location visibility and geofencing for added security and location-based alerts. By bringing these capabilities together in one connected system, DEX360 helps RV owners monitor critical trailer information, protect their investment and travel with greater confidence.

Why is this technology helpful?

Birkbeck: For the end user, trekMount means a cleaner, more reliable install with less exposed wiring and a smaller overall footprint, since the bracket wraps around the inverter and uses the space around it more efficiently. It's also built exclusively around Victron Energy components, so customers get the space and installation benefits of trekMount without giving up any of the performance or durability they'd expect from a Victron system. For dealers and technicians, it dramatically cuts install time and reduces error: Instead of fabricating mounting points

and running cable in a tight, awkward compartment, techs get predrilled and tapped holes for components, a mounting template and cable management already worked out. That means faster installs, fewer callbacks and a system that's easier to service down the road.

Butler: For the person buying the RV, it removes the headache of managing half a dozen different control panels or tracking down separate phone apps. Everything sits in one place. Setting up camp, adjusting the lights or checking tank levels becomes simple, whether someone is standing in the kitchen or sitting outside. Automatic features like generator starting and power management also work behind the scenes to protect battery bank health and keep appliances running smoothly. For dealerships and service centers, centralized systems simplify both sales and repairs. A sales team can walk a buyer through the entire coach from a single screen instead of pointing to 10 different switches. When a unit comes in for maintenance, our onboard diagnostics display real-time fault codes directly on the display. This gives technicians instant visibility into what is going on, leading to faster repairs, higher first-time fix rates and reduced warranty claims.

Gray: For RV owners, continuous monitoring of tire pressure and internal temperature helps drivers recognize developing issues early, allowing them to respond before a small problem becomes a roadside emergency. For OEMs, dealers and service technicians, flexibility is equally important. Every RV platform is different, which is why we offer multiple sensor and display options that integrate seamlessly into new production while also supporting aftermarket installations. That flexibility reduces complexity and ensures customers receive the monitoring experience that best fits their RV. Just as importantly, partnering with Voyager means working with a company that understands the unique demands of the RV industry and is committed to supporting manufacturers and

consumers long after production begins.

Corn: Today's consumers have become accustomed to controlling and monitoring aspects of their lives through connected devices. Smart RV technology extends that expectation to the camping experience by giving owners greater awareness of what's happening with their RV, whether they're driving, camping or preparing for travel. For example, tire pressure monitoring systems help owners identify tire issues before they become roadside emergencies, and propane sensors reduce the likelihood of unexpectedly running out of fuel. OneControl reduces the complexity of operating multiple RV systems by consolidating controls into a single platform. For dealers, smart technology provides an opportunity to enhance the customer experience during both the sales and delivery process. Connected products create valuable demonstration opportunities and help differentiate units on the lot. As buyers compare RV features to the smart capabilities of their homes and vehicles, connected technologies can become a selling point. For technicians and service personnel, diagnostic visibility and connected systems can simplify troubleshooting. Smart products often provide users with more information about system



ASA Electronics' Voyager interface. Photo courtesy of ASA Electronics



Dexter's DEX360 Smart Trailer System.
Photo courtesy of Dexter

status, allowing for more informed conversations between owners and service teams. In addition, many of these products are designed to integrate into familiar RV systems, making upgrades and replacements more approachable. The broader industry is also moving toward increased adoption of safety-focused technologies.

Brady: DEX360 Smart Trailer technology benefits both RV owners and the professionals who support them. For the end user, features such as TPMS, tire temperature monitoring, battery monitoring, GPS tracking, geofencing and a virtual odometer provide greater visibility into the trailer's condition, location and usage. This can identify potential issues earlier, improve security, simplify maintenance planning and give owners greater confidence while traveling. For RV dealers and technicians, DEX360 can provide useful trailer data that helps streamline troubleshooting, service and maintenance conversations. Access to information

about tire conditions, battery status, mileage and trailer usage can help technicians better understand potential issues and support more efficient diagnostics. For dealers, connected technology also enhances the customer experience by offering a modern, differentiated feature that can strengthen engagement throughout the ownership life cycle.

Can it be installed in all RVs? If so, what do dealers need to know about installing it?

Birkbeck: trekMount is designed to work across RVs, camper vans, overland vehicles and specialty trailers. The trekMount is currently built around the Victron MultiPlus-II 3000VA inverter/charger, though we have a new trekMount Flex product that can be used with any inverter/charger. trekMount and Victron systems are compatible with any battery brand, and most common Victron components have dedicated mounting points. For older or preowned RVs, installation is straightforward as long as there's room for the bracket's footprint (24 inches x 22.5 inches x 6.75 inches without components). If a customer is using a component we don't currently support with predrilled holes, we'll work with them to either drill custom holes in an open area of the bracket, or they can mount that component separately.

Butler: Our smart RV systems are exclusively designed for OEM factory installation during the manufacturing process. They cannot be installed as an aftermarket upgrade by dealers or

service technicians, though platforms like Firefly Spark give OEMs flexible options for midproduction integrations across different floorplans.

Gray: Yes. Voyager's TPMS platform is designed to support virtually every RV and trailer application. For OEM production, manufacturers can choose between in-tire banded nylon strap sensors and valve-mounted sensors depending on wheel design and application. Banded nylon strap sensors are ideal for aluminum wheels, while valve-mounted sensors provide another proven factory-installed solution. For existing RVs and trailers, valve stem screw-on sensors offer a simple retrofit that can be installed without removing the tires or replacing the wheels. Because wheel specifications vary between manufacturers, proper sensor selection remains important. Our team works closely with OEMs to ensure the right solution is specified from the start.

Corn: Compatibility varies depending on the product, but one of the major trends we're seeing in the smart RV category is the growth of aftermarket solutions. Many connected products are designed to be installed on a wide range of existing RVs and trailers, not just newly manufactured units. This creates opportunities within the pre-owned RV market. Dealers can offer smart technology upgrades as part of reconditioning efforts, predelivery packages or consumer upgrade programs. Rather than requiring customers to purchase a new RV to access modern technology, many connected products can be added to existing units. From an installation perspective, dealers should focus on three key areas:

- **Compatibility Verification:** Always verify model-specific fitment requirements, available power sources and integration needs before installation.
- **Connectivity Requirements:** Many smart products use Bluetooth or app-based functionality. Dealers should educate customers on smartphone compatibility and



The Furrrion Vision S camera system. Photo courtesy of Lippert

Driving Dealership Performance Forward



The **2026 RV Dealers Convention/Expo** is the premier education and networking event for RV dealership professionals. Join dealers, managers, and industry leaders from across North America, Nov. 9-13, 2026, Paris Las Vegas. Built by dealers for dealers, the Convention/Expo delivers practical education you can put to work immediately. Explore proven strategies to improve operations, increase profitability, strengthen your team, and elevate the customer experience.

Educational sessions will focus on topics including:

- ◆ Fixed operations and service efficiency
- ◆ Sales strategies and customer experience
- ◆ Leadership and workforce development
- ◆ F&I performance and compliance
- ◆ Marketing, digital retailing, and emerging trends

Beyond education, the Expo Hall gives attendees direct access to more than 150 leading industry suppliers showcasing products, services, technology, and solutions designed to help dealerships operate more efficiently and profitably. Connect with peers, discover new ideas and find solutions that can make an immediate impact on your business. Register today at RVDAExpo.com

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Firefly Spark
Photo courtesy of Firefly Integrations

app setup during delivery.

- **Customer Onboarding:** Installation is only part of the process. Taking a few extra minutes to help owners pair devices, register products, and understand available features can dramatically improve customer satisfaction and adoption.

Brady: DEX360 Smart Trailer is designed for broad compatibility with many towable RV applications, with installation requirements that depend on the RV's configuration. Dealers should ensure that compatible sensors and components are properly installed, powered and paired with the DEX360 system app to ensure proper TPMS, battery monitoring, GPS tracking and related connected features. The system installation is designed to be straightforward, but dealers are encouraged to follow the recommended installation procedures and verify system connectivity and sensor operation before delivery.

What are the basics someone needs to know to operate it?

Birkbeck: trekMount itself doesn't add any operational complexity; it's a mounting and wiring solution, not a control system, so customers still operate their Victron system exactly as they would otherwise (via the Cerbo GX, VRM or VictronConnect app). What dealers should communicate is the build process; we can work with customers (or dealers) to size the system and select the correct components, or they can determine that themselves. We then build a 3D mockup to confirm fit and placement, and the bracket ships

either as trekMount Solo, ready for mounting components and wiring, or as trekMount Ready, [which is] fully wired, programmed and tested so it's essentially plug-and-play on install day.

Butler: If a customer knows how to use a smartphone, they can operate a Firefly system. We also have a YouTube channel with how-to videos. The main operational points to cover during a walkthrough are:

- 1. Unified Touchscreen:** Main functions like climate controls, slides and tank levels are grouped under clear icons on one display.
- 2. One-Touch Master Controls:** Owners can shut off all lights with a single button press or run custom lighting scenes like "theater mode" without adjusting individual channels.
- 3. Automated Power Monitoring:** The system handles power distribution automatically. Auto Generator Start and load shedding manage electrical draws to prevent tripped breakers and protect battery life.
- 4. Mobile App Pairing:** The RV+ app lets owners mirror panel functions directly on their personal mobile devices, either locally or remotely.

Gray: The basics are straightforward: the system continuously monitors tire pressure and temperature and communicates that information through the customer's selected display method. Depending on the configuration, information can be viewed through a smartphone app, the vehicle's existing screen, a dedicated in-cab display or an analog USB dongle. Dealers should educate customers on how to access their tire information and how to recognize alerts of abnormal conditions. Customers should pay attention to indications of underinflation, overinflation, rapid or slow pressure loss, complete pressure loss, abnormal tire temperature and sensor communication loss.

Corn: The most important thing dealers can do is help customers understand that successful smart RV ownership starts with familiarity and confidence. A few best practices include [helping] customers download the app and [completing] setup before



trekMount AC/DC
Photo courtesy of Trek Systems

leaving the dealership to establish familiarity; [helping] customers understand what notifications they'll receive and what actions they should take when alerts occur; [showing] owners how to operate systems manually when necessary, for example, Lippert's Bluetooth keyless lock; [and] demonstrating real-world applications rather than discussing technical specifications. Showing an owner how to check propane levels from a campsite, monitor tire pressure during travel or use a camera system as a security solution tends to drive stronger engagement and understanding.

Brady: The DEX360 app is designed to be intuitive and user-friendly, making it easy for customers to download the app, register their trailer and select a subscription plan. Dealers can help customers get started by showing them how to connect to the DEX360 system, navigate the feature icons, check system and sensor statuses, understand alerts and set up available features such as GPS tracking and geofencing. Dexter has also developed dedicated DEX360 support materials for both dealer sales teams and end users. These resources are designed to support the entire customer journey, from the initial product conversation and purchase decision through setup and ongoing ownership. Dealers can also access videos, installation guidance and the DEX360 landing page for additional product information, training and support resources. **RVF**

MORE THAN GETTING PAID: THE ROLE OF PAYMENTS IN THE MODERN RV DEALERSHIP

FREE | OCTOBER 8 | 1 P.M. CENTRAL

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Payments are more than a way to complete a transaction – they're a critical part of how an RV dealership operates. In this webinar, we'll explore why bringing payments directly into your DMS can help eliminate disconnected workflows, reduce manual reconciliation, improve visibility into how money moves through your dealership, and create a more seamless experience for both employees and customers. We'll also

look at how embedded payment solutions like Lightspeed RevPay bring transactions, reporting, funding, chargebacks, and support together in one connected experience – giving dealers less complexity and greater control over their business.

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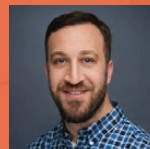
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Bigger groups aren't just winning because they're bigger. They're winning because they set standards and stick to them — and any dealership can do the same.

BY ERIC PEDRETTI



Plan, Protect, Scale: *Don't Let the Big Stores Take Your Shelf*

Every consolidation cycle produces the same anxious math. A dealer sees a regional group acquire three more stores and assumes the only path forward is to get bigger, get bought or get left behind. That math misses an important part of what's driving the gap between winners and everyone else.

According to "The State of the RV Dealer: 2026," sourced from more than half the RV market through InteractRV's dealer network, merger and acquisition activity and generational ownership transitions are accelerating consolidation. That's making it harder for smaller operations to compete.

It's worth saying plainly: A bigger group's budget, buying power and staffing depth are genuine advantages. No independent dealer should pretend otherwise.

But the same report also shows the top 10% of dealers (independent and grouped alike) generate 4.5 times more leads and turn inventory 54% faster than the rest of the market. Budget alone doesn't explain a gap that wide, because plenty of well-funded stores land outside of that top 10%. What separates the leaders, at every size, is how consistently they plan, protect and scale the fundamentals. That's the lever an independent dealer can pull

without waiting for a bigger budget to show up first.

Plan: Set the Standard Before the Market Sets It for You

Bigger groups have an advantage that has nothing to do with money: they run every store the same way. Same response-time standard, same pricing approach, same weekly reporting cadence. Independent dealers usually have the discipline to do the same. What's often missing is the plan that turns discipline into a repeatable habit rather than something that happens when someone remembers to do it.

Planning starts with deciding, in writing, who owns what. Who owns speed to response on a lead? What's the after-hours plan when the store is closed? Who reviews the numbers and on what day of the week? None of this requires new head count. It requires deciding once instead of relitigating every week.

This matters more headed into 2027 than it might feel like it does right now. Locking in standards during a slower season means a dealership walks into next year's demand already running the playbook, instead of building it under pressure once the leads start showing up.

Protect: The Two Moves That Cost Nothing & Travel Fastest

Two specific practices stand out as some of the highest leverage moves available to independent dealers. Both are worth protecting deliberately rather than treating as background hygiene:

- **Pricing transparency:** Prep fees and freight add real cost between the OEM and the lot, and the report is direct about this: dealers who disclose that cost clearly, rather than surfacing it for the first time at the financing stage, close more cleanly and lose fewer buyers to distrust. It costs nothing to show the math. It just requires deciding to show it early instead of late.

- **After-hours coverage:** More than half of shoppers browse outside standard business hours, and listings with clear price and financing information generate 47.9% more high-quality leads. An independent dealer doesn't need a night shift to compete here. A well-set inquiry form with email-to-text alerts and a clear voicemail message covers most of the gap. The goal isn't round-the-clock staffing. It's making sure interest doesn't die just because the lights are off.

Both of these are protective moves in the truest sense: they don't grow the business on their own, but they stop a dealership from losing ground it already has. In a consolidating market, that's not a small thing. Every deal a competitor closes because a lead sat unanswered overnight is a deal an independent dealer could have kept.

Scale: Grow the Relationship, Not Just the Transaction

The instinct under competitive pressure is to chase more units out the door. That instinct misses where the real, compounding value sits.

Most RVers own their unit for at least five years, often on 20-year financing, on a purchase they're genuinely invested in. That's a long relationship with a lot of touchpoints in the middle: service, parts, referrals. A dealership chasing only inventory turns tends to leave those touchpoints on the table.

Scaling, done well, means growing the number of moments a dealership stays present in that relationship. Keep service pages current with hours, booking options and active specials. Use past-buyer outreach, referral programs and seasonal events to drive repeat business. Treat the service department as a retention engine, not a cost center.

None of that requires acquiring another store or adding another salesperson. It requires deciding that

the sale isn't the end of the relationship. It's the start of a much longer one and building the habits that keep a dealership visible throughout it.

This is also where independent dealers have a structural edge that bigger groups sometimes lose along the way. A single-location dealership can know its regulars by name, remember what they towed in with and follow up in a way that a fast-scaling group juggling a dozen rooftops usually can't replicate as easily.

Discipline Is the Lever You Control

Consolidation is going to keep reshaping the RV retail landscape, and no independent dealer needs to pretend otherwise. Scale brings real advantages, and a bigger group's budget and staffing depth aren't nothing.

But size isn't the only variable, and it's rarely the one that separates one independent dealership from another down the street. Among stores competing on similar footing, the ones that plan their standards, protect the fundamentals that already work and scale the relationships that outlast the transaction are the ones pulling ahead. That same discipline is also what lets a well-run independent hold its own against bigger competitors, even if it doesn't close the gap entirely.

That's a competitive strategy any independent dealership can run starting this quarter, without waiting for a bigger budget or a bigger team to show up first. **RVP**

Eric Pedretti is director of sales at InteractRV. A graduate of the University of Northern Iowa with a marketing and public relations degree, Pedretti started working with dealers 20 years ago, starting in automotive and then for the past 17 years in RV, marine and powersports industries.





Dealers should weigh carrying costs, inventory turn and the cost of waiting before stocking up on new units.

BY SAYDE WOTEN

What's Really in the Cart?

The True Cost of RV Inventory

Before committing to more inventory for model year 2027, dealers should consider not only what a unit could earn, but also what it will cost to own until it sells.

For an RV dealership, inventory is the product. But it is also one of the largest financial commitments in the business. That makes the new model year season a good time to ask a slightly different question before committing to the next unit: Not simply, "Can we sell this RV?" but "Should we own this RV, and how many of them should we own?"

A good buy from the manufacturer is not always a good inventory decision for the dealership. The purchase price is only the beginning of what that inventory actually costs.

Every Day on the Lot Has a Price

Floorplan interest is the obvious carrying cost, but it is one piece of the equation. As inventory ages, interest continues to accrue, and depending on the floorplan arrangement, curtailments may require the dealership to put additional cash into the unit. Meanwhile, employees move the RV, clean it and maintain it. The RV occupies lot space and uses floorplan capacity that could support something else. It also remains part of the dealership's physical damage exposure to hail, wind, theft, vandalism and other losses. Insurance belongs in that calculation. Changes in inventory levels and values can affect a dealership's overall exposure, so dealers should understand how





inventory is reported, what limits apply and whether their coverage still reflects what is sitting on the ground.

Perhaps the biggest carrying cost is that the market keeps moving even when the RV doesn't. New model years arrive. OEM incentives change. Competing dealers adjust prices. Consumer preferences shift. And sometimes the first markdown available today is considerably cheaper than the markdown required six months from now.

Protecting gross has a cost. The question is whether the gross being protected is worth what the dealership is paying to wait for it.

Inventory Turn Changes the Economics

Dealers now have access to more inventory information than ever before. They can increasingly understand days' supply, comparable units in the market, pricing position, geographic demand, historical retail performance and how quickly specific models and floorplans are turning.

That makes inventory turn especially important. How quickly does a unit turn back into cash? A fast-turning RV frees capital, floorplan capacity and lot space, and creates an opportunity to generate profit.

A slow-turning RV does the opposite. That doesn't make every slow-moving unit a bad investment. Some units deserve patience, and some specialty inventory can justify waiting for the right buyer and defending gross. The important thing is knowing the difference before the unit becomes aged inventory. Sometimes the mistake isn't buying the wrong RV — it is buying too many of the right RV. A dealership may have demand for a particular floorplan without needing four or six. Inventory depth is just as important as product selection.

The Desk Should Know the Cost of Waiting

This isn't only a purchasing or

accounting conversation. Sales management should understand it, too. When a deal comes across on an aging RV, the question is, "How much gross are we giving up if we take this deal?" Other questions should be: "What is it costing us to keep this unit, and what could replace it?"

Suppose accepting \$2,000 less today moves an aging RV and frees the capital and lot position for something with stronger demand. The next unit creates another opportunity for front-end gross, F&I income, parts and accessory sales, service work and potentially another trade.

That trade matters. A thinner deal on an aged new RV may bring in a highly desirable used unit that turns quickly and generates additional gross of its own. Now the decision is no longer about protecting \$2,000 of front-end gross on a single VIN. It's about total-deal profitability and what that same capital could earn next.

Don't measure an aging unit only against the gross you hoped to make. Measure it against the profitability of what could take its place. Sometimes waiting makes sense, but sometimes taking the deal, turning the inventory and redeploying the capital is more profitable. The discipline is knowing when to defend margin and when to turn the asset.

Run the 90/180-Day Test Before You Buy

To bring the conversation back to the launch season of the new model year, manufacturers need production commitments, and dealers need desirable inventory. Those interests often align, but they do not always align perfectly. The manufacturer needs to move production. The dealership owns the carrying cost.

So before committing to a unit, ask: "What happens if this RV is still here in 90 days?" and "What is our plan if it is still here in 180?" Consider the floorplan expense, possible curtailments, insurance exposure, maintenance and handling,

competing inventory, model year changes, market incentives, depreciation and the discount that might eventually be required to move it.

Then compare those costs with the expected total gross and realistic turn of the unit. This does not need to become a perfect accounting exercise; the goal is simply to make the cost of ownership visible before the purchase order is signed.

For one RV, the answer may be to take it. For another, take one instead of four. For another it may make sense to locate or trade for when customer demand develops, and occasionally, the most profitable inventory decision may be not to buy it.

One Question for the New Model Year

Inventory that turns at an acceptable margin is the engine of an RV dealership. Inventory that doesn't turn becomes interest expense, potential curtailments, insurance exposure, maintenance, depreciation, discount pressure and trapped capital. It can also become a missed opportunity to own something more profitable. Inventory is not profitable simply because the dealership bought it well. It becomes profitable when the dealer buys the right unit, in the right quantity, turns it in the right amount of time and generates enough total gross to justify the capital it consumed.

Be sure to ask not only: "How many of these can we get?" but also "How many of these should we actually own?" That may be the more profitable question. **RVP**

Sayde Woten is an RV dealership insurance specialist at Dealer Shield, working with dealers nationwide on commercial insurance, risk management and renewal strategy. Her work focuses on helping dealership leaders understand how insurance and risk decisions connect to the broader financial health of their businesses.





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What a decade of homebuyers can teach us about RV dealers' walk-around videos.

BY MICHAEL MATSON

PHOTO COURTESY OF LIGHTSPEED

Bring the Showroom *to the Shopping Cart*



A couple three states away finds a travel trailer on your website. They like the floorplan. They study the little top-down diagram, the one with the tiny icons for the bed, the dinette, the sofa. They zoom in on six photos. And then they get stuck, because a floorplan and a photo gallery can only take a buyer so far. They cannot tell how the light comes through the front windows. They cannot tell whether the walk from the bedroom to the bathroom feels tight. They cannot picture themselves living in it. So they keep scrolling, and somewhere along the way, they find a dealer who showed them.

That gap between what a buyer can see online and what they need to feel before they commit is the oldest problem in big-ticket retail. But it is also a gap that is resolvable.



The Floorplan Problem

Ask anyone who has sold RVs for a living and they will tell you the same thing: the unit does not sell until the buyer gets inside it. People do not buy a recreational vehicle the way they buy an appliance. They buy it because they want it to feel like home. A spec sheet does not communicate homey. Neither does a floorplan. Buyers struggle to connect a top-down map and online slideshow of images to what the space actually feels like when they are walking through it, and that disconnect is where a lot of interested shoppers quietly go cold.

It is worth being honest about why this matters more than it used to. Buyers have moved to video. They learn about the units they want on YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, where someone spends 30 unscripted minutes walking through a coach and pointing out every cabinet and quirk. That is the standard your shoppers now carry with them. When they land on a static gallery and a diagram, it feels thin by comparison, and thin does not build the confidence it takes to spend tens of thousands of dollars.

The other half of the problem is geography. A large share of RV sales happen across state lines. The buyer who drives four hours to see a unit has usually already made their decision, and the final walkthrough is just to confirm it. Before that point, they are comparing units with similar specs from dealers across several states. Their decision to drive hundreds of miles and sign on the dotted line is made in no small part by the dealership that bridges the distance for them. Video can do exactly that. Every dealer is competing for that out-of-state customer, but the one who wins is the one who can bring the walkthrough to them.

What Real Estate Figured Out First

Real estate agents solved a nearly identical problem years ago, and their playbook translates almost directly to

the RV lot. Nobody buys a house from a floorplan either. So agents stopped relying on the diagram. They stage the property first, and then they walk a camera through it, room by room, narrating as they go. The video does the work the floorplan cannot: it gives the space a feeling.

The staging is not a gimmick. It is the point. An agent makes sure the home is clean, turns on the lights, opens the blinds and adds a few warm touches so the buyer can imagine a life happening inside it. The same instinct applies to a coach on your lot. Before you shoot, make sure it is clean and that nothing is hanging loose. Plug it in and turn on every light. If you want to go a step further, a few small touches — the kind that make a dinette look like a place where a family actually eats — do the same thing a staged living room does. You are not decorating. You are helping the buyer see themselves in it.

And then the camera moves. Walk the outside first. Point out the hitch, the awning, the steps, the storage. Then step in and show the buyer why people fall in love with RVs in the first place. Show how the bed sits. Show how the sofa converts. Show the desk in the back that turns a trailer into a place you can work from on the road. These are the details that never survive a photo and never show up on a diagram, and they are almost always the details that close the deal.

Get Specific & Forget Generic Examples

There is a distinction here that is easy to miss and important to get right. A manufacturer video, or a spinning 3D model on a website, shows the buyer a version of the unit. A personalized walk-around shows them the unit. Not one like it. Not a similar layout with different upholstery. The exact coach they could have adventures and make memories in.

That specificity changes the conversation. A buyer watching a generic model is still shopping. A

buyer watching the actual unit they inquired about is deciding. It also lets the salesperson do something no template ever could: talk like a person. A real voice walking through a real coach signals that the dealer has nothing to hide, that what you see is what is there. That trust is hard to manufacture and easy to feel.

It opens a natural door, too. When a salesperson is already walking a buyer through the coach they love, mentioning the upgrade that would make it even better does not land like an upsell. It lands like advice from someone who knows the unit. The same sentence in an automated email reads as a pitch. On video, from a real person, it reads as help.

Where the Tool Meets the Workflow

None of this works if it is a hassle. The reason video follow-up has historically stalled at dealerships is not that salespeople doubt it works. It is that recording on a personal phone, texting it from a personal number and losing track of what went to whom is one more thing to do at the end of a long day. The dealers who have made video stick are the ones who made it take less effort than not doing it.

This is where a sales video tool integrated with your dealership management system and CRM earns its place. Instead of recording on a personal phone and texting from a personal number, a rep opens the lead with a preset reminder attached to send the walkthrough video. They record the walk-around and send it to the buyer by text or email, and all that context stays in the same ecosystem.

The video stays attached to the deal, so a manager can see what was sent, a rep can remember whether the last video was a first follow-up or an attempt to warm a cold lead, and nothing lives or dies on one person's camera roll. Pair that with electronic signatures, and an out-of-state buyer can go from watching the coach to putting a deposit on it without ever driving in. The specific tool matters less than creating an easily repeatable video workflow in the system you use to desk your deals and communicate with customers.

For the video itself, the recording routine is purposefully straightforward. Prep the unit first: Clean it, plug everything in and turn on every light so the space looks lived-in rather than parked. Say the buyer's name and reference what they told you they were looking for, so the video feels made for them and

not pulled off a shelf. Show the exact unit, stock number and all, rather than a similar layout. Start outside and work in, pointing out the details a photo never captures, the hitch, the awning, the storage, then step through the door and let the interior do the selling. Keep it short enough to hold attention but long enough to answer their questions. Two minutes is a good benchmark. End the video with a clear next step, whether that is a call, a deposit link or an invitation to come see it in person. None of this is rocket science. All it takes is a phone and the discipline to build a system.

The Takeaway

The buyers you lose to a floorplan rarely tell you why. They just move on to the dealer who bridged the distance for them. Video is how you bridge it, and the approach is not complicated. Stage the unit like a home, walk the

camera through it inside and out, and send the buyer the exact coach they asked about, in the medium they already trust. Real estate proved the model years ago. The RV lot is a natural fit for it.

When interest is high, that is the moment to make the unit feel real. A well-made walk-around does that better than anything short of the buyer standing in the doorway themselves, and for a growing number of shoppers, it is the closest they will get before they decide to buy. **RV2**

Michael Matson brings more than a decade of experience in the automotive and recreation industries to his role as national enterprise account executive at Lightspeed. An outdoor enthusiast, he combines his industry expertise with a passion for building strong relationships and helping enterprise dealers succeed.



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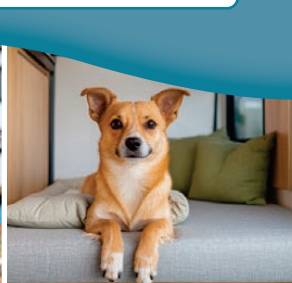
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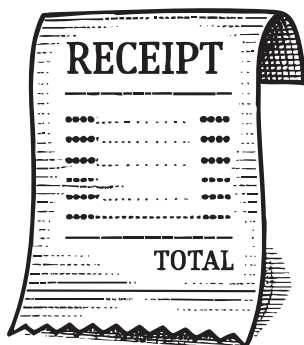


Cash In on Opportunity:

Service as the Center of Dealership Profitability

As front-end margins tighten, RV dealers are relying more heavily on service, F&I and long-term customer retention to sustain growth.

BY MIKE COYLE



For several years, dealerships operated in a market where strong demand and limited inventory supported healthy front-end profits. Dealers could move units quickly, and many stores naturally focused most of their energy on the sales side of the business. That environment has leveled out. Customers are shopping more carefully, financing costs continue to influence buying decisions and dealers are putting more attention on the parts of the business that generate revenue after the sale.

In July, Presidio-NCM data showed dealership pretax profits declined 11.8% year over year in Q2 2026, while fixed operations and F&I remained more stable contributors to profitability. That shift is becoming more visible across the industry. Service and parts departments now account for roughly half of a dealership's total gross profit, which has pushed many dealers to look at customer retention and the ownership experience after the sale. RV dealerships are feeling many of the same pressures. Margins on the front end are tighter than they were a few

years ago, so that shift feels natural because ownership has always been an ongoing relationship rather than a one-time transaction.

Why Fixed Ops Carry So Much Weight

RV customers stay connected to the dealership long after delivery day. They come back for maintenance, repairs, warranty work, accessories and advice before their next trip. Many first-time buyers are still learning the basics of ownership after they leave the lot, whether that means understanding winterization schedules, towing requirements or electrical systems. That learning curve matters more today because first-time owners now make up 36% of all RV owners, which means dealerships are spending far more time helping customers navigate RV ownership from the ground up.

That creates an opportunity for service departments to build trust over time. Customers remember whether communication stayed clear during a delayed repair or whether someone took the time to explain a problem without making

them feel overwhelmed. When service departments stay responsive and organized, customers come back. When communication breaks down, customers start looking for support elsewhere, whether that's an independent repair shop, an online owner group or another dealership.

Dealerships also manage far more than repair work today. Fixed operations now include inspections, accessory installation, collision repair, mobile service and campground support during travel season. Every one of those interactions shapes how customers view the dealership long term.

Departments Have To Work Together Better

Dealerships still struggle with gaps between departments. Sales handles the delivery process, F&I presents protection products and service takes over later.

Internally, that structure makes sense operationally, but customers experience the dealership as one business. They expect communication between departments to feel connected from the beginning of ownership through every future visit.

Problems appear when departments aren't sharing information consistently. A salesperson may set expectations the service department was never aware of. A service adviser may not know what concerns came up during delivery. Customers notice when they have to repeat information multiple times to different people inside the same dealership.

The dealerships that operate smoothly improve those handoffs throughout the ownership process. Service introductions during delivery, shared customer notes between departments and realistic conversations about service timelines can make a difference in retention. Customers want to feel like the dealership knows who they are every time they walk through the door.

Retention Is Becoming Part of Everyone's Job

Dealer groups are also rethinking how employees are trained and measured. Historically, dealerships rewarded immediate sales performance because front-end gross carried much of the business. Dealers are now paying closer attention to repeat business, service retention and long-term customer relationships because those areas contribute more consistently to profitability over time.

That shift changes how employees approach their roles. Salespeople don't need to become technicians, but they should understand enough about RV ownership to prepare customers for what comes next. Service advisers aren't only managing repair orders. They're maintaining relationships that determine whether a customer stays connected to the dealership for years.

First-time buyers make this important. Customers arrive after spending weeks researching online, but they still want guidance from people who understand the product and can explain ownership in practical terms. Customers appreciate expertise when it feels straightforward and useful rather than overly technical.

Operational Consistency Still Matters

Dealerships already recognize the value of fixed operations revenue. The harder challenge is maintaining consistency during busy periods when service departments are under pressure. Technician shortages, warranty delays and parts availability issues continue creating scheduling challenges across the RV industry, especially during peak travel months when customers are preparing for family trips.

Communication matters just as much as the repair itself in those situations. Customers are patient when dealerships provide honest timelines and regular updates. Frustration builds when

communication is inconsistent, or when expectations continue to change without explanation.

Technology can support those processes, but systems alone don't solve operational issues. Online scheduling tools and customer relationship management platforms only work when departments communicate consistently and employees follow through. Many dealerships are also continuing to refine how they approach mobile service during travel season because customers expect flexibility around where repairs and inspections happen.

The Long-Term Opportunity for Dealers

Front-end sales will always matter, but dealerships benefit from having profitability spread across multiple areas of the business instead of relying too heavily on one source of revenue. RV ownership naturally creates years of customer interaction, which gives dealerships ongoing opportunities to strengthen relationships after the initial sale.

Customers remember who answered the phone during a stressful trip, who kept them informed during a repair and who made ownership easier to navigate. Those day-to-day interactions determine whether a customer returns for future service, upgrades or eventually another RV purchase. That's why dealerships are putting more focus on service operations, internal communication and ownership support. In the RV business, customer relationships are built through consistent follow-through after the sale rather than through any single transaction. **RV**

Mike Coyle is the COO of Kunes Auto & RV Group's RV Division. Coyle has been a leader in the RV space for 20 years. He brings his enthusiasm for sales and processes, as well as his talent to galvanize a team to the RV division. For more information, visit kunes.com.





Tips for managing buyers who need a little more time in their RV shopping journey.

BY MATT KISELSTEIN

From Checking You Out to Checkout: *How To Close the Deal*

It's 11:40 p.m. Somewhere in Ohio, a woman sits on her couch with her laptop open and her husband asleep upstairs. She types "bunkhouse trailer under 30 feet" into a dealership's website. Minute one — she's scrolling floorplans. Minute 20 — she's asking about tow weight, doing the math in her head, because their SUV is rated for 5,000 pounds and she wants to be sure. Minute 40 — she asks the only question that matters: What's the out-the-door price? She gets a straight answer, or she

doesn't. This is the precise moment the new RV smell starts to wear off. Either way, she closes the laptop, and her vision of s'mores and grandkids goes to bed with her.

At 9 a.m. the next morning, the form she filled out or the chat transcript she typed lands in a customer relationship management (CRM) program as a lead with a time stamp nobody on the floor was awake for. She's already down the road, just not in your trailer. The store tries anyway, more than once. A

few weeks pass. She doesn't recognize the number on her caller ID, so she doesn't answer. The email with the subject line "Just checking in" gets ignored. The sales manager marks her "dead" and moves on, because in his world, quiet means dead and dead is a disposition in a legacy CRM's drop-down menu.

The fact is, she was never gone. She was still deciding. And every CRM ever conceived would have called her dead two weeks ago. Sound familiar?

Where These Numbers Come From

The numbers in this article come from aggregated, anonymized behavioral data gathered across 16 RV and powersports dealer groups operating 20 rooftops, covering 7,512 shopper sessions, 2,178 substantive conversations and 2,850 identified leads between Feb. 6 and Aug. 14, 2026. Shoppers came from 46 states, the District of Columbia and four Canadian provinces. An identified lead here means a shopper who provided a name plus an email address or phone number. Ninety-four percent of the substantive conversations in the dataset were purchase inquiries.

I started measuring this because of a salesman I watched years ago in retail auto. He sat at the top of the board month in and month out without ever leaving his chair.

No greet, no walk-around, no trial close. He sold by appointment only. Everything happened on the phone, and he never got whipped around the lot. He shook hands and took signatures. What did he have that no CRM could possibly understand? He read people, the best room-reader ever to grace the retail business. The one-size-fits-all sales funnel fits nobody. He knew that 30 years ago. The data finally proves it.

Why Leads Really Go Dark

Here's what the data says: Of 3,221 genuine buyer leads that went dark, 47.9% came down to one thing: the buyer simply wasn't ready yet. A price gap accounted for 6.4%. Timing kills seven times more deals than price. All money-related reasons combined, price, payment, rate and credit, add up to less than 10%. About 1 in 5 dark leads wanted a unit the dealer didn't

have in stock. About 1 in 7 went dark after friction with the store's own follow-up process.

Read that again. The thing dealers think is killing their leads — price — isn't even in the top three. Timing is, and timing isn't a rejection. It's a calendar problem. What does it cost a store to be wrong about half of these files? Everything. Every one of them is a buyer who was going to buy an RV from somebody. The only question was whether that somebody kept the door open long enough.

The Clock

The internet has changed your actual business hours. The sales conversation has moved to a time slot the sales floor doesn't work: 45.3% of substantive buying conversations



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start outside a typical sales-floor week, meaning before 8 a.m., after 7 p.m. local time or on a weekend. More than 1 in 4 identified leads arrive after hours. About 1 in 9 real conversations start between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. The single busiest hour of the day is 2 p.m., but the 7 p.m.-to-midnight block carries about 21% of all real conversations. Sessions containing a real conversation run a median of roughly 40 minutes on the dealer's website.

At 11 p.m., a buyer will give you 40 uninterrupted minutes. Try getting that out of a walk-in on a Saturday afternoon with three other ups on the board.

The Comeback

Six percent of identified buyers later returned and were recognizable as the same shopper on a new visit. Fourteen percent of identified leads had browsed the dealer's site anonymously days before ever filling

out a form; the lead existed before the store knew it did. And among leads that went quiet and were followed up on, more than half of all replies came on the third touch or later, while about 1 in 5 replies arrived more than a full day after the message that prompted them.

Buyers remember who stayed polite. That's the whole secret, and it costs nothing. The salesperson who never once made her feel stupid for taking three weeks to decide on a \$40,000 purchase gets the callback, not the guy who called four times in five days like she owed him a decision by Thursday. If you take anything from this article, take this: She owes you nothing.

Touch three done wrong: "Just checking in" isn't a message. It's a demand wearing a courtesy trench coat, and buyers can smell the difference from across the internet. Touch three done right is an answer to the question she asked in week one

or news about the unit she wanted. One respects that she's still deciding. The other tells her she's now a task on somebody's board. And that's if the store manages its leads at all. In all likelihood, she's heard from more than one salesperson, and every one of them is "Just checking in." That screams "Are you ready yet?" and every email after it reads "How about now?" Would you reply to that sequence?

The Sprinters

The market isn't slow. It's bimodal. When buyers were ready, deals moved fast. Among those that dealers' closed, roughly half came together within about a day of first contact, and 9 in 10 within eight days. Speed for the sprinters, patience for everyone else. A store that gets both postures right doesn't treat every lead the same way. It figures out which buyer it's looking at and moves at that buyer's pace instead of its own.

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The Cast of Characters

Here's who is showing up in the data, night after night.

The Midnight Researcher: About 1 in 9 conversations start between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., and 14% of leads browsed before they ever raised a hand. Your 20-year sales manager calls this a tire kicker. He's wrong. She's doing her homework before she's willing to be sold to.

The Not-Yet: Almost half of dark leads, and most of the replies that ever come back, arrive on touch three or later. The floor calls this one dead. It's not dead. It's early.

The Payment Shopper: Their top questions are out-the-door price, monthly payment and financing, yet money kills under 10% of deals. They don't want a discount. They want a straight number from somebody who isn't afraid to give it to them.

The Sprinter: Half of closed deals happen inside about a day. The floor thinks every buyer needs to be nurtured. This one needed you to pick up the phone an hour ago.

The Missed Fit: About 1 in 5 wanted something the store didn't have in stock. The dead-lead file is a demand forecast nobody's reading. Every one of those names is telling you what to order next.

What To Do Now

There are five things a store can do to prep for these various buyers. Add a "not ready" disposition to the CRM with a scheduled future touch attached and forbid anyone from marking a lead dead, when the actual objection was a date. Answer the out-the-door question straight and early — the first store to say the real number wins the trust. Cover the digital night shift: whatever your website does at 11 p.m., make sure an

overnight inquiry gets a real answer before 9 a.m., not a form receipt. Don't quit at two touches, because most replies come later than that, and make touch three about information, never "checking in." And log every inventory miss, every time a buyer wanted something you didn't have, and let those misses talk to your ordering desk.

"Dead" is a diagnosis, and this industry hands it out too early. The buyer was never gone. She was on her couch at 11:40 p.m. and she came back three weeks later to whoever still had the patience to answer the question straight. **RVZ**

Matt Kiselstein is the founder of SentientIQ, the company behind SeerChat.ai, which builds emotionally intelligent sales software for RV and powersports dealerships. A 30-year industry veteran, his career runs from traditional media to machine learning. Reach him at matt@sentientiq.app or seerops.ai.



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Many dealerships are losing more labor hours than they realize.

BY MARK BOSWELL

Clocking In: *Making Labor Hours Count*



Not every dealership service department looks the same right now. Some are still busy. Some are steady. Some are noticeably softer than they were a year or two ago. Some technicians are working through full schedules, while others are waiting longer between repair orders.

That is the reality of today's RV market.

But regardless of volume, one thing remains true: Every labor hour matters more now.

When demand is strong, inefficiency often hides. Volume covers mistakes. Full schedules create

momentum. Operational friction becomes easier to tolerate.

But softer or unpredictable markets expose something dealerships can no longer afford to ignore: Labor hours the dealership pays for but never bills.

Many dealerships are losing more of those hours than they realize because labor leakage rarely announces itself. It hides inside daily workflow:

- A technician waiting on parts
- A technician waiting on approval
- An incomplete repair order
- A service adviser buried in update calls
- A dispatch decision delayed



- A customer authorization that takes longer than expected
- A technician ready to work but with no properly prepared repair order ready to enter the bay

In a busy department, those moments quietly reduce productivity. In a slower department, they magnify underutilized labor. Different circumstances — the same financial problem: Paid time that never becomes billed time.

That matters in every market. But especially this one.

Today's environment leaves dealerships with far less room for operational waste. Margins feel tighter. Consumers are more selective. Operating costs remain elevated. Every productive labor hour carries greater value.

Yet many dealerships still confuse activity with performance. The shop feels busy. Phones are ringing. Advisers are moving. Managers are solving problems. Technicians rarely stop working.

But activity and productivity are not the same thing.

A technician can stay in motion all day and still produce disappointing billed hours. A department can feel overwhelmed while quietly underperforming financially. A full schedule can still hide significant labor leakage.

The most expensive labor problem inside many dealerships is often invisible. Ten minutes waiting on an approval. Five minutes locating a part. A repair order missing information. An unnecessary interruption. A technician searching for the next job instead of performing one.

Individually, none of those moments seem significant. Collectively, they become one of the largest hidden expenses inside fixed operations. Especially when markets soften.

During stronger years, dealerships could often absorb those losses without fully realizing it. Volume helped cover workflow breakdowns. Backlogs hid inefficiency. Lost labor opportunities felt replaceable.

Today's market is much less forgiving. This is why fixed operations must operate with greater discipline than ever before.

Not because every dealership is overloaded. And not because every dealership is slow. Because every dealership has less room for preventable waste.

For busier stores, the challenge is removing friction before it slows technician productivity.

For slower stores, the challenge is converting every available labor opportunity into productive billed work.

Both require the same thing: Operational discipline.

The strongest dealerships understand something many others miss: The goal is not simply keeping technicians busy, the goal is protecting technician productivity.

Those are two very different conversations.

A technician can appear fully occupied while productive capacity quietly disappears. A dealership can believe it has a staffing problem when the real issue is workflow.

Because dealership profitability rarely disappears all at once. It leaks. One delayed approval. One missing part. One incomplete repair order. One preventable interruption. One technician waiting when productive work should already be ready.

Repeated hundreds of times throughout the year, those small moments can become significant financial losses. Especially in markets like today's.

How many labor hours is your dealership paying for that never become billed revenue?

The dealerships that outperform during uncertain markets will not necessarily be the busiest. They will be the most disciplined.

The ones that know exactly where technician time is going. The ones that reduce friction before it becomes lost labor. The ones that stop measuring busyness and start measuring productivity.

Because whether your service department is full, steady or softer than expected, the question remains the same: How many labor hours is your dealership paying for that never become billed revenue?

For many dealerships, the answer is uncomfortable.

Because in today's market, every labor hour matters.

And the labor hours your dealership never bills — but still pays for — may be costing far more than anyone realizes. **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.





What your customers don't see behind closed doors is a foundation that should operate efficiently.

BY MEL SELWAY

What's 'In the Back':

Keeping Your Parts & Accessories Department in Shape

In my previous month's column, I suggested that the parts department in some RV dealerships might require some inspection — at least occasionally — to ensure that it is being operated efficiently and profitably.

In fact, the suggested inspection is part of your management exercises identified in the title of this article. I suggest that managers should exercise their "pects" in order to build a strong backbone for your dealership. Each manager should *inspect* what is *expected* in order to gain the *respect* of their associates.

Exercise Basics

It is necessary that management clearly state what is expected. Establish department/dealership operational

objectives and policy. This requires identification of what is important — to the dealership culture, to the economic viability of the department/dealership and to serving the customer base. This might require a management team meeting to brainstorm these expectations or at least to refine existing ones.

After establishing these expectations, they must be clearly communicated to each associate — preferably at the same time, verbally and in print. Then, it will be necessary to routinely inspect the performance to these expectations to determine if they are being achieved. I invite owners/GMs to inspect the parts manager, who should be inspecting the parts associates. So, what could be some expectations for the parts department?

First Set

Asset management is a major function of the parts manager in an RV dealership. For this column, I am including the following list of items as assets, though many might argue that some are more properly considered expenses. I am not asking you to accept my classification. However, I am asking that you consider my reasoning after you read this column.

- Parts, accessories and other goods necessary to service/repair RVs
- Dealership supplies to include stationery, dealership maintenance, shop supplies
- Personnel
- Space
- Storage and display equipment
- The dealer management system (DMS) database (parts and accessories; customer)

Parts and accessories inventories meet the accepted definition of an asset, so first we will look at the inventory of goods that are controlled within the parts department. In last month's column, I suggested that you inspect the level of a few randomly selected items to determine if the level is appropriate to the needs of your customers and of the dealership. What did your research expose?

You did perform the spot-check, didn't you? Inspect what you expect to gain the respect of your associates.

Below are a series of steps I suggest you could follow to determine if you have the right amount of stuff. I am assuming that you will research items that are stocked because they have a recurring, recorded demand. If any of this asset management research mystifies you, I suggest that you contact a consultant to assist you.

The Right Stuff, in the Right Amount

1. Select a stock item, perhaps a fluid used to maintain an RV (cleaning, lubrication, waste or other).
2. Decide what the gross turn (GT) for this type item should be — for this

example, we will use a GT of 6.

3. Divide 365 (days in a year) by the GT to calculate the days of supply (DOS).
 - a. Example: $365 \div 6 = 60.83$ rounded to 61 DOS
4. Add up the total demand for this item that is recorded in your DMS or in your manual tally sheet.
 - a. Example: 191 demands over a 22 month period
5. Divide the total demand by the total number of months of demand history.
 - a. Example: $191 \div 22 = 8.68$ demands per month on average
6. Divide the quotient from step 5 by 30 to determine the usage per day.
 - a. Example: $8.68 \div 30 = 0.29$ units per day usage on average
7. Multiply the DOS (calculated in step 3) by the answer from step 6.
 - a. Example: $61 \times 0.29 = 17.69$ rounded up to 18 = required on-hand needed
8. Compare the answer from step 7 to the current on-hand quantity. Is the answer greater than, equal to or less than the current on-hand quantity of the item?

If the answer from step 7 is:

- Greater than your on-hand quantity, then you could be understocked
- Equal to the on-hand quantity, then you are probably at the correct level
- Less than the on-hand quantity, then you could be overstocked

This example is based on straight-line averaging of your demand history and does not take into account factors such as seasonality, pack quantities and purchase programs. However, it does provide a starting point for you to determine if the level of inventory is reasonably appropriate, and more importantly, it demonstrates that you are inspecting your expectations.

Second Set

Though the supplies needed to maintain the dealership are

eventually classified as expenses, I suggest that you consider them as inventory until they are issued.

Waste control systems is a commonly used function in an RV. Like your RV customers, it is important to establish a supplies control policy that minimizes waste. If you implement and enforce an effective supplies control policy, then you could improve the net profit of your dealership.

I suggest that you assign a part number, a bin location, cost per unit and a pricing scheme to as many of your dealership maintenance supplies as possible. Yes, even those 1/4-20 x 1-inch hex bolts. For those items that are purchased from several vendors, assign a part number (PN) that reflects the items rather than the source. For instance:

- PN = DLB — for drop light bulbs that might be purchased from various sources, rather than the PN that is assigned by each source; this enables tracking of the purchase and issue of one PN rather than multiple PN representing the same item.

This will minimize the replenishment efforts, and it establishes the perception of a secure, controlled inventory of the supplies. This makes a statement to your associates that you expect a return on your investment and that you intend to inspect the operations to determine if you are achieving that return.

Without control of these supplies, your associates will assume that the supplies have no value and may help themselves to legal pads, pens and the myriad other supplies that are required to operate the dealership. By controlling these, your parts manager can track the usage and costs involved and make appropriate purchasing decisions aided by the DMS.

Third Set

Personnel is usually listed as an expense on the financial statement;

however, I am asking you to consider dealership employees as an asset.

In last month's column, I suggested that you evaluate the selling skills of the parts associates and the service advisers. What are the results of your investigation?

Inspect what you expect. Every sales opportunity is important. Perhaps some selling skills training for parts associates and service advisers could improve the dealership income picture.

Speaking of your parts associates, what do you expect from them? Do they know what those expectations are? For instance, do you expect eight hours work for eight hours pay? How do you know if you are receiving full value for the wages you pay? Do you occasionally see a parts associate standing around? Perhaps you could add to your management exercises and inspect your expectations so that you could gain the respect of your associates.

To optimize the utilization of your personnel asset, implement to-do lists of assigned maintenance tasks. Create a form that includes areas for recording the task status, the name of the person assigned to a task/project and a description of the task/project. I invite you to contact me if you would like a sample TDL form.

Instruct your parts manager to walk through the parts department and create a daily to-do list of assigned maintenance tasks. This list might include cleaning the lighting fixtures, merchandising a display fixture, mopping the floors or any other tasks necessary to keep the department spick-and-span.

Why is it necessary to assign a task to a specific associate? If a task isn't assigned, there is no accountability and, therefore, most likely no performance to expectation. Before the end of shift, inspect the to-do list and determine the status of each task. Interact with each parts associate

and physically inspect their work. Congratulate or counsel as needed. You will gain their attention and their respect because you have expressed an interest in their work and established that this work is important enough for you to take an interest.

At all times, the image of the dealership is an important intangible asset. You may sell the same goods as any other RV dealership. It is how you offer them for sale that makes you different.

This concludes our exercise routine for this month. In future issues, I will offer other methods for you to make the backbone of your dealership as strong as possible. You can expect that! **RVP**

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



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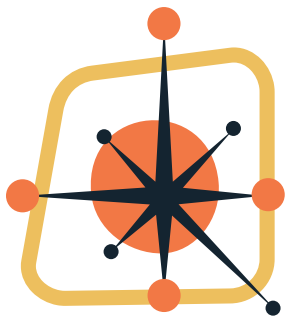




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The atmospheric and sensory experience at your dealership is almost as important to customers as your inventory itself.

BY LINDA CAHAN



Are Your Aisles Speaking To Your Customer?

Out of curiosity, I typed my subject for this month's column into ChatGPT. Within 1 minute, an entire column emerged and it was technically perfect. My heart plummeted, my ego shattered a little and I wondered why editors even hire writers at this point. As I read, I recognized ideas and sentences I've written over the years and realized that AI is spitting back what it gleaned from everyone who has ever written about RVs in books and magazines.

After a couple of days of debating my existence in the world of writing, I realized something profound: AI doesn't experience anything. Zip. Nada. No emotions, no frustrations, no delights and no anger. I do — and often! When I walk into an RV dealership, I experience a vast amount of information as it floods my system. I immediately get a vibe about whether I want to shop the store or just walk out and go somewhere else.

A vibe sounds subjective, and much

of it is, but a vibe is comprised of a lot of elements that aren't just gut feelings. We aren't consciously aware of everything that hits at once, but we simultaneously experience

the light levels, the odors and the colors. While we are within seconds of figuring out where to walk in this new place, we are in limbo about whether this RV location will fulfill our needs.

This is a make-or-break moment for a lot of shoppers. If all the sensory elements are working in accord with one another and the aisle layouts and decorative elements make sense with the merchandise, a customer on a mission will look for their desired area to accomplish their task. Good signage and/or sight lines can make this easy. But if the customer is new to buying an RV (or other related merchandise), they may not know

where to start other than wandering around the showroom and reading the signs.

People get jumpy when they are immediately hailed with a boisterous "hi, welcome in, let me know if you have any questions!" Sometimes a simple "hi" and a warm smile is all that is needed. Most people figure a salesperson is there to help them. That's their purpose in the store.

The goal is not to script every word of the greeting; it's to replace uncertainty with warm, natural and friendly communication. I went into a Pendleton store in Seattle years ago and the salesperson looked up from working on something and said "Hi, nice scarf." I had planned to just look around, but I was seen and acknowledged. So instead, I looked a little longer and ended up buying a coat for \$259. I would have felt like a dumb sucker if she then complimented the next person who walked in. But she didn't, and her compliment felt genuine.

I walked into a RV store a few years ago, and there were two men at the main desk, both on their phones on what seemed to be business calls. Both were significantly younger than me, and neither looked up from their phones for even a second to acknowledge my existence.

I stood there for 5 minutes in the hope of asking a question. I didn't expect either of them to get off their calls, which seemed important, but I did expect someone to look up and smile, just so I'd know that I was noticed and should continue to wait.

They never looked up, and after they were both off their respective calls, they turned to each other to talk. While I was still standing there, 2 feet from their desks.

It would be an understatement to say I felt really bad vibes. While all the visuals in the store were terrific, I felt like an unwanted intruder. Please instruct your employees to pleasantly acknowledge customers with a smile and body language that says, "I'll be with you shortly."

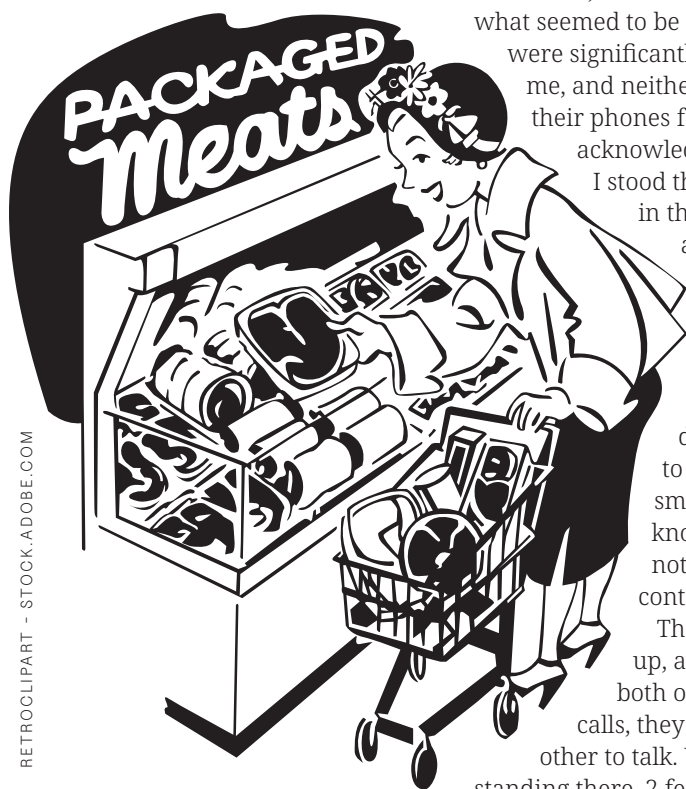
In all my columns over the years for RV PRO, I've gone into the basics of excellent presentation including good displays, attractive focal areas, clear signs, a comfortable place to sit, a pleasant scent, good lighting, fresh air (not stagnant) and an atmosphere that says, "Take your time. You belong here."

Is the parts area easy to find? Do you have signage that has good contrast and is clearly visible from the front door? Is there a feeling of nature inside your showroom that gives the sense of what people are looking for while traveling? If not, add it! You can add wall murals that reflect nature and then put good fake trees in front of the mural that make the scene feel 3D.

I spoke with two internationally recognized experts in retail presentation about the indefinable vibe of a store. Each mentioned first how the RV store looks as well as what senses are engaged. Then, each veered into the "make or break" of a store experience.

Brian Dyches, CEO and founder of Ensemble, leads a global collective of over 250-architectural, engineering and interior professionals. His first thought was how "a complete design is the air that envelopes all of us. We see and experience everything all at once and the coordination of all the design elements need to work together to create an effective environment."

His pet peeve is the ongoing "miss" in many RV stores — the lack of nature in the environment. Dyches said that if you don't have a strong visual in the beginning of the customer "journey," you've missed the opportunity to engage them. The sense of nature is a major part of



the sensory journey. He compared the scent of pine trees to smelling a croissant — you forget how much butter is in it; you're just reminded of the deliciousness of the experience. It goes to your cortex and stays in your memory of a deeply pleasant and taste-filled experience.

Scent deserves special attention because RV parts and accessories are in enclosed spaces. Fresh and neutral usually wins. Avoid strong air fresheners that can create suspicion about what they are covering up. A clean, natural-smelling environment says far more than a heavy fragrance ever will. There are all-natural pine scents that can replicate the real thing in a subtle way, not like the tree falling on your head.

Peter-Tolin Baker, co-owner of JP General shop in Portland, Oregon, and former global vice president of visual merchandising at Tiffany in New York City, summed it up perfectly. He talked about how the sound/music in the store has to match the customers' preferences, not those of the sales associates; otherwise, it can be a "sound assault." How the scents in the store must be fresh and appealing with no hint of mildew or too many chemical odors. And he reminds store owners and managers to make sure they walk into their stores through the front door, not the back. This way they can experience the customer journey and see what their customers are seeing from the front door to the back.

This is an excellent piece of advice as you stop seeing the store and showroom as your customers see it. You don't smell what they smell because you're used to it. It's like going into a person's home who has a male cat who has claimed his territory by spraying. The smell is awful, but that person may not notice it because they're used to it.

Notice whether your entrance is inviting or chaotic. Are there messy areas, UPS parcels, old cardboard displays or merchandise on the floor rather than on a fixture? Is there a

clear focal area that is interesting, fresh and, ideally, fun? Is there something that inspires people to look further?

Your customers will pick up on the small signals: clean displays, clear signs, a comfortable place to sit, a pleasant scent, good lighting and an atmosphere that says, "Take your time. You belong here."

In the RV sales areas, give customers room to sit and talk. Create a comfortable seating area with chairs with arms so people of all abilities and ages can get up and down easily. Have a clean consultation table or an uncluttered desk. Neat and clean communicates respect. How you treat your surroundings reflects directly on the customer's perception of how you will treat them in the future. Nobody wants to make a major purchase while balancing a brochure on their knee beside a printer, a pile of forms

and an overflowing wastebasket.

"Vibe" may sound like a soft word for a business with hard numbers to hit, but it has real commercial consequences. People shopping for RVs are not simply buying a vehicle or a replacement hose. They are buying experiences: fun weekends, family traditions, road trips and independence with a better view. The environment around the sale should support that emotional purchase. Simply, they want to leave your dealership feeling good. That vibe lasts! **RV2**

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





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DRIVER'S LICENSE AUTHENTICATION

700Credit, Southfield, Michigan, offers its QuickScan Driver's License Authentication. QuickScan from 700Credit is a mobile document scanner that provides dealerships real-time confirmation of the legitimacy of a customer's driver's license and identity. It can be used with both in-store and remote customers.

700credit.com



DAY OF DELIVERY KIT

Camco, Greensboro, North Carolina, offers its Day of Delivery Kit. Camco's Five-Star Dealer Program helps dealerships turn delivery day into a business advantage. By pairing premium Day of Delivery Kits with the Camco's Better Equipped for Life Lifetime Warranty, dealers can simplify the buying experience while strengthening customer confidence. Combined with product training and marketing support, the program helps drive customer retention, strengthen service connections, uncover additional revenue opportunities and build long-term business growth through deeper post-sale customer relationships.

camcooutdoors.com

RV SAFETY SYSTEM

ASA Electronics, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its Voyager Connected RV Safety. Voyager Safety Systems creates a connected safety ecosystem designed to give RVers greater awareness and confidence on the road. WiSight 270 provides a clear view around the RV, helping drivers navigate, maneuver and monitor their surroundings, while Voyager TPMS continuously monitors tire pressure and internal temperature for developing issues.

voyagersafety.com



SOLAR KIT FOR STARLINK

AIMS Power, Reno, Nevada, presents its Starling Complete Solar Kit for Starlink. The Expedition Starling complete solar kit delivers dependable, portable power for DIYers, installers, mobile setups and small off-grid applications. An all-in-one solution, it combines solar charging, battery storage and clean AC power in one integrated system. It's ideal for powering essential electronics, including computers, Starlink Mini, phones, lighting and other devices. Expedition Lynx is also available for Starlink Dish.

aimscorp.net



DIGITAL WORKFLOW SOLUTION

AppOne, Kettering, Ohio, offers its eContracting. AppOne's eContracting solution streamlines the vehicle financing process by enabling dealers to electronically prepare, review and submit loan documents directly to participating lenders. The secure digital workflow helps reduce paperwork, improve accuracy and accelerate funding. Consumers benefit from a faster, more convenient financing experience with fewer delays.

appone.net





WIRELESS AUTO START SYSTEM

Cummins, Elkhart, Indiana, presents its EC-AGS+ Wireless Auto Start System. Using a mobile app, RV owners can automatically, manually or voice-start their generator, monitor interior temperature, receive maintenance and diagnostic alerts, and help keep batteries charged before quiet hours. Easy to install and designed for compatible Onan RV generators, EC-AGS+ is available in dedicated gas and diesel application kits.

cummins.com



SMART BATTERIES

Dragonfly Energy, Reno, Nevada, presents its Battle Born Smart Batteries, which bring connected energy management to RV power systems. Built with Dragonfly IntelLigence, they allow owners to monitor state of charge, voltage, current, temperature and system health through the Battle Born Mobile App. For multibattery systems, the Battle Born HUB

creates a wireless mesh network for system-wide monitoring, diagnostics, alerts and remote access. Available in 100Ah 12V, 100Ah GC2 and 270Ah GC3 configurations.

battlebornbatteries.com



FLEXIBLE RV SOLAR PANELS

Due North Solar - Powered by OPES, Middlebury, Indiana, offers its Flexible RV Solar Panels. New to the U.S. RV market, Due North brings solar technology from OPES, a global leader in solar innovation. When part of the panel is affected, the electrical current routes around the obstructed area rather than deactivating that portion, increasing reliable power output. Lightweight, vibration-proof and frameless, these panels integrate directly into the RV roof with a low-profile design built specifically for the road.

aimduenorth.com



3D CONFIGURATION TOOL

Digital Tails Group, Hoboken, New Jersey, offers its OWNRV. Beyond 3D configuration, which helps RV manufacturers guide buyers through valid configurations, preserve every build through dealer handoff and turn structured configuration data into actionable quotes, orders and production workflows. It features fast, mobile-ready 3D, rules that prevent invalid builds, saved configurations across visits, AI-generated lifestyle images and video featuring the buyer's exact RV and a seamless dealer handoff with complete build context.

digital-tails.group



TIRE PRESSURE MONITORING SYSTEM

TST by P.S.I., San Antonio, Texas, presents its TST SafeSense TPMS Mobile App. Turn your smartphone, Apple CarPlay or Android Auto into a real-time tire health dashboard for your tow vehicle, truck, motorhome, trailer, RV or fifth wheel. The TST SafeSense Mobile App displays live tire pressure, temperature and sensor battery status for every wheel, helping you identify tire issues before they become roadside emergencies.

tsttruck.com



FLOORPLAN FINANCING SOLUTIONS

Huntington Distribution Finance, Schaumburg, Illinois, offers its Huntington Distribution Finance. Operating from both U.S. and Canada offices, Huntington Distribution Finance offers floorplan financing solutions to manufacturers, distributors and dealers in various markets, including powersports, lawn and garden, recreational and specialty vehicles, marine, construction, agriculture and consumer electronics and appliances. The company is committed to building relationships with customers and focuses on providing easy, tailored solutions supporting dealers' growth goals.

huntingtondf.com



WI-FI SURGE PROTECTOR

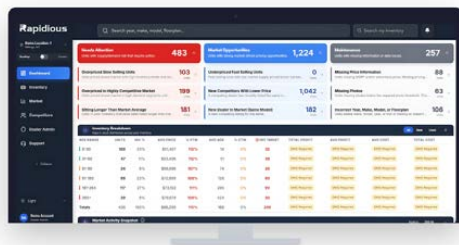
Power Watchdog, Anaheim, California, presents its Power Watchdog Wi-Fi Surge Protector. All Power Watchdog units feature Bluetooth connectivity for wireless alerts, real time data and fault monitoring. However, the newer Gen 2 units feature both Bluetooth and Wi-Fi connectivity, allowing users to get all that data and alerts remotely, when they're miles away from their RV.

powerwatchdog.com

ADAPTIVE PRICING PLATFORM

Rapidious, Austin, Texas, offers its Rapidious Titan.AI, an adaptive pricing platform for RV dealerships across the U.S. and Canada. It combines live market signals with a dealer's own inventory, regional conditions, aging and turnover, and margin goals to continually recommend how inventory should be priced. Dealers use it daily — at the appraisal desk, on the lot and in the buying office — to appraise trades, price competitively, manage aging/margin risk and make smarter buy/order decisions, all from one live dashboard.

rapidious.com



Motility Anywhere



DEALER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Motility Software Solutions, Dayton, Ohio, offers its MotilityAnywhere. Run your dealership from one connected system with MotilityAnywhere. This scalable, web-based DMS brings sales, service, parts, finance, accounting and more together on a single platform. You can streamline manual processes, gain real-time visibility into every department and access the data you need to make confident business decisions. Whether you have one location or many, MotilityAnywhere helps simplify operations across your entire dealership.

motilitysoftware.com



VEHICLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

REDARC, Houston, Texas, presents its REDVision Vehicle Management System, a complete vehicle management system that puts power, monitoring and accessory control at your fingertips. Designed for RVs, campers, trailers and 4x4s, REDVision lets users monitor battery state of charge, power consumption, water levels and temperatures while controlling lights, fridges, pumps, inverters and more. Access everything through the REDVision Pro Display or smartphone app. With modular components and streamlined wiring, REDVision simplifies complex electrical systems and provides smarter, more convenient control.

redarcelectronics.com



TIRE PRESSURE MONITORING SYSTEM

SpartanLync Technologies, Burlington, Ontario, presents its SpartanLync Towable TPMS. Bluetooth TPMS sensors communicate with a custom-branded app for any RV OEM and displays data directly to the towing vehicles infotainment display or monitors silently in the background. Low pressure or high temperature tires are alerted to the driver immediately.

spartanlync.com



INVERTER CHARGER PACKAGES

Go Power! | Dometic, Victoria, British Columbia, presents

its Advanced Inverter Charger Packages. Go Power's new Advanced Inverter Charger Packages pair the AIC with the PowerTrak Display. Customers get inverter, charger, transfer switch and live system monitoring in one box.

The AIC is lighter and smaller than previous models, so it fits tighter bays and installs faster. Available in 2000W and 3000W models.

gopowersolar.com

PORTABLE HOTSPOT

TraviFi, Rochester, Minnesota, offers its TraviFi JourneyGo 5G, a portable hotspot designed for life on the move, delivering fast, reliable internet. Powered by TowerSync, it automatically connects to the strongest available network, no SIM swaps or contracts required. With 5G speeds, Wi-Fi 6 efficiency and support for up to 16 devices, it's ideal for RVers, campers and remote workers. The built-in touch screen and flexible, no-commitment data plans make staying connected simple, whether on the road or off-grid.

travifi.com



LIGHTSPEED
REVPAY

EMBEDDED PAYMENT PLATFORM

Lightspeed DMS, South Jordan, Utah, presents its RevPay, the embedded payments platform built directly into Lightspeed DMS. Process transactions, automatically reconcile payments, manage funding and chargebacks, and access real-time reporting in one unified experience. With payments, reporting and support all in one system, RevPay gives your dealership greater visibility, control and simplicity in how you manage your business.

lightspeeddms.com

AI-POWERED OPERATING SYSTEM

ServiceNomad, Austin, Texas, offers its ServiceNomad. ServiceNomad answers calls, collects RV and service details, follows your service-area rules and books qualified work so you can stay focused on the RV in front of you. ServiceNomad helps RV dealer service departments handle inbound calls, capture complete service and warranty intake, schedule appointments, collect photos and documentation, and keep customers moving through the service process without adding more administrative burden to the team.

servicenomad.ai



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Pit Stop



Your Sign, Your Park

Visit **USA Parks** paired each zodiac sign with a national park based on its signature traits. The stars have spoken — find out which national park is written in yours:

Aquarius (Jan. 20–Feb. 18) — Petrified Forest National Park
Pisces (Feb. 19–March 20) — North Cascades National Park
Aries (March 21–April 19) — Yellowstone National Park
Taurus (April 20–May 20) — Yosemite National Park
Gemini (May 21–June 20) — Rocky Mountain National Park
Cancer (June 21–July 22) — Dry Tortugas National Park
Leo (July 23–Aug. 22) — Glacier National Park
Virgo (Aug. 23–Sept. 22) — New River Gorge National Park
Libra (Sept. 23–Oct. 22) — Haleakalā National Park
Scorpio (Oct. 23–Nov. 22) — Mammoth Cave National Park
Sagittarius (Nov. 23–Dec. 21) — Gates of the Arctic National Park
Capricorn (Dec. 22–Jan. 19) — Great Sand Dunes National Park



BE THE LIGHT FOR CHILDREN WITH CANCER

Care Camps Foundation announced **Under The Stars: Where Hope Makes Light**, a three-day fundraising and community-building event hosted by the inaugural Young Professionals Board.

When: Dec. 4–6

Where: Lazydays RV Resort in Tampa, Florida

Why: Designed to introduce a new generation of supporters to Care Camps Foundation and its mission, **Under The Stars** will bring together colleagues, business leaders, outdoor enthusiasts, Care Camps advocates, family and friends for a weekend of impact, connection and celebration.

The event will culminate in an ambitious world-record attempt: **45,000** glow sticks will be assembled into one continuous chain, representing the approximately 45,000 children Care Camps has helped through its mission. When completed, the chain of light is expected to span nearly 5.5 miles.

Find sponsorship opportunities, glow stick donations and more at carecamps.org.

On Aug. 19, the RVIA Government Affairs team elevated the industry's policy objectives at an **RV Caucus** event on Capitol Hill with 100-plus Hill staff in attendance. The event focused on building new connections and educating attendees on the RV sector's legislative priorities, carrying momentum from this year's Advocacy Day on:

- Reauthorization of the **Legacy Restoration Fund** — to secure necessary funds to continue modernizing and improving campgrounds and outdoor recreation infrastructure across the country.
- Passage of the **No Tax on RV Loans** legislation, which was introduced in May by Congressman Rudy Yakym and Congresswoman Dina Titus and would allow consumers to deduct up to \$10,000 in interest.



23 MILLION ON THE ROAD

As Americans look toward autumn getaways amid ongoing air travel headaches, economic pressures, rising costs and the desire to disconnect from technology, new research from the **RVIA's quarterly travel intentions survey** shows the continued appeal of RV travel and the affordability, comfort and control it offers travelers.

The survey found that **23 million Americans are planning to take an RV trip this fall**, reinforcing RVing's appeal as a flexible and practical way to travel. More than 11 million Americans planned to take an RV trip over Labor Day, while more than **9.4 million Americans who do not currently own an RV plan to rent or borrow one this fall**.

JULY 2026 SHIPMENTS

19,948 (units)
total RV shipments

11.9% decrease
compared to **July 2025**
(22,633 units)

Through 7 months, shipments are down **13.9%** with **183,592** units shipped

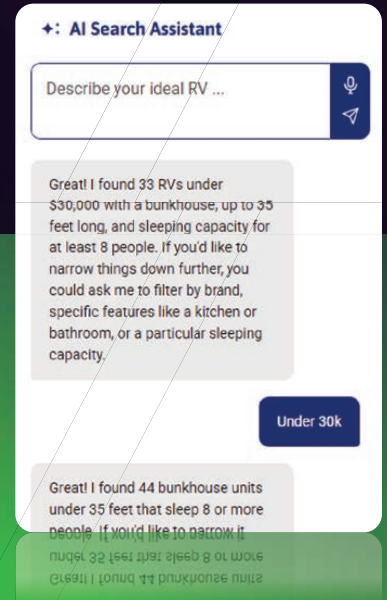
Towable RVs, led by conventional travel trailers, ended the month down 9.8% from last July with 17,754 shipments. Motorhomes finished the month down 25.6% compared to the same month last year with 2,194 units.

Park model RVs finished July up 29.7% compared to the same month last year, with 410 wholesale shipments. To date, park models are up 24.5% with 3,015 units shipped.

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AI Search Assistant helps shoppers describe what they need in their own words and instantly surfaces the RVs that fit. No filters, no guesswork, just better leads.



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First-time buyers move through the process without getting stuck on questions. Experienced owners skip straight to what they need. Both reach out sooner, so you spend less time waiting and more time closing.



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AI Search Assistant fits naturally into the AI Product Suite, adding another layer to an already powerful set of tools for the modern dealer experience.

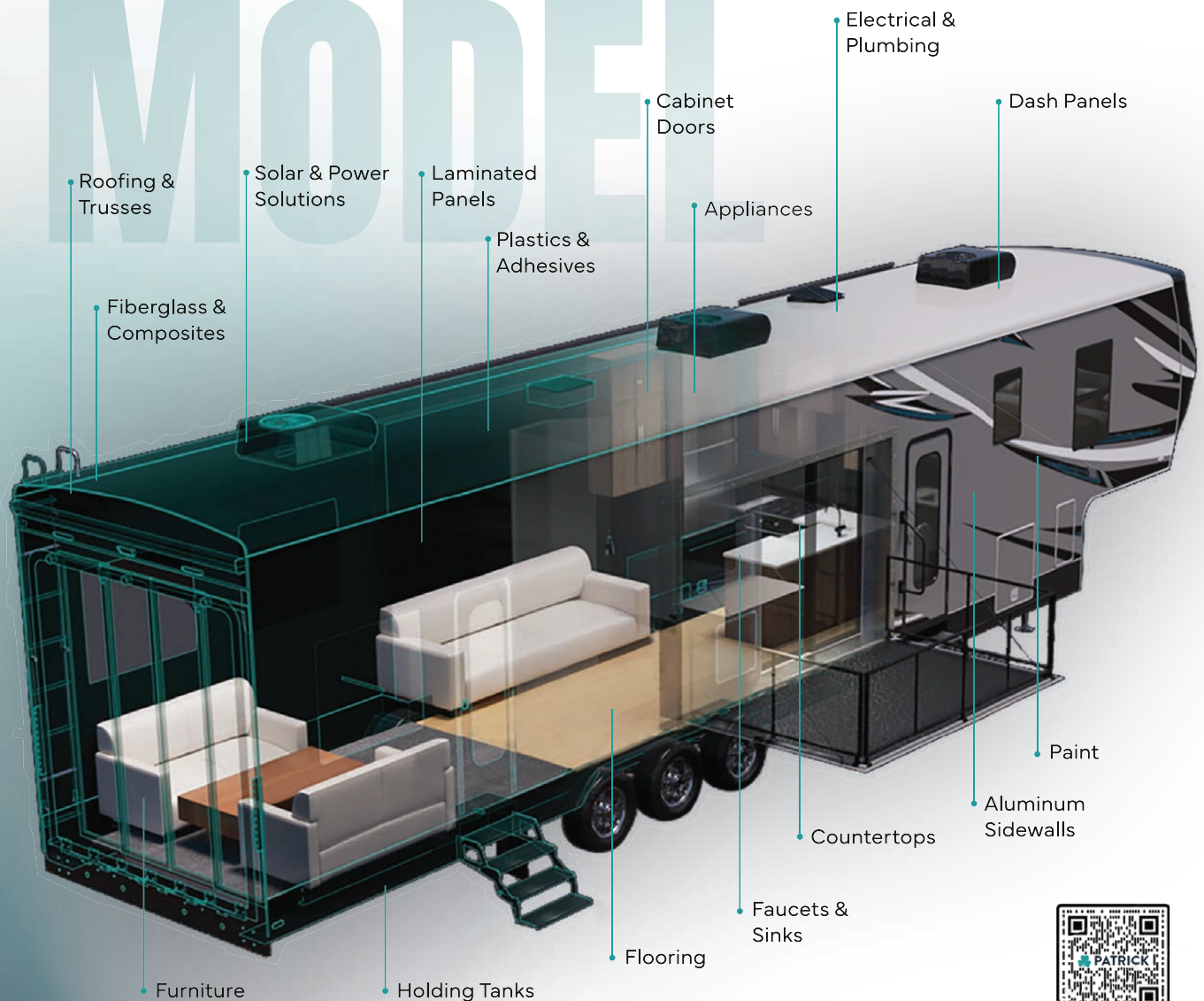
Request Your Demo

While others focus on what's coming next, AI Search Assistant is focused on what matters today—helping shoppers find the right RV faster, with more confidence, and every reason to stay on your site.



Patrick's RV brands empower the world's leading RV manufacturers with a full suite of high-quality interior and exterior component solutions, personalized customer service, expert product innovation, and design consultation.

FULL SOLUTIONS MODEL



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