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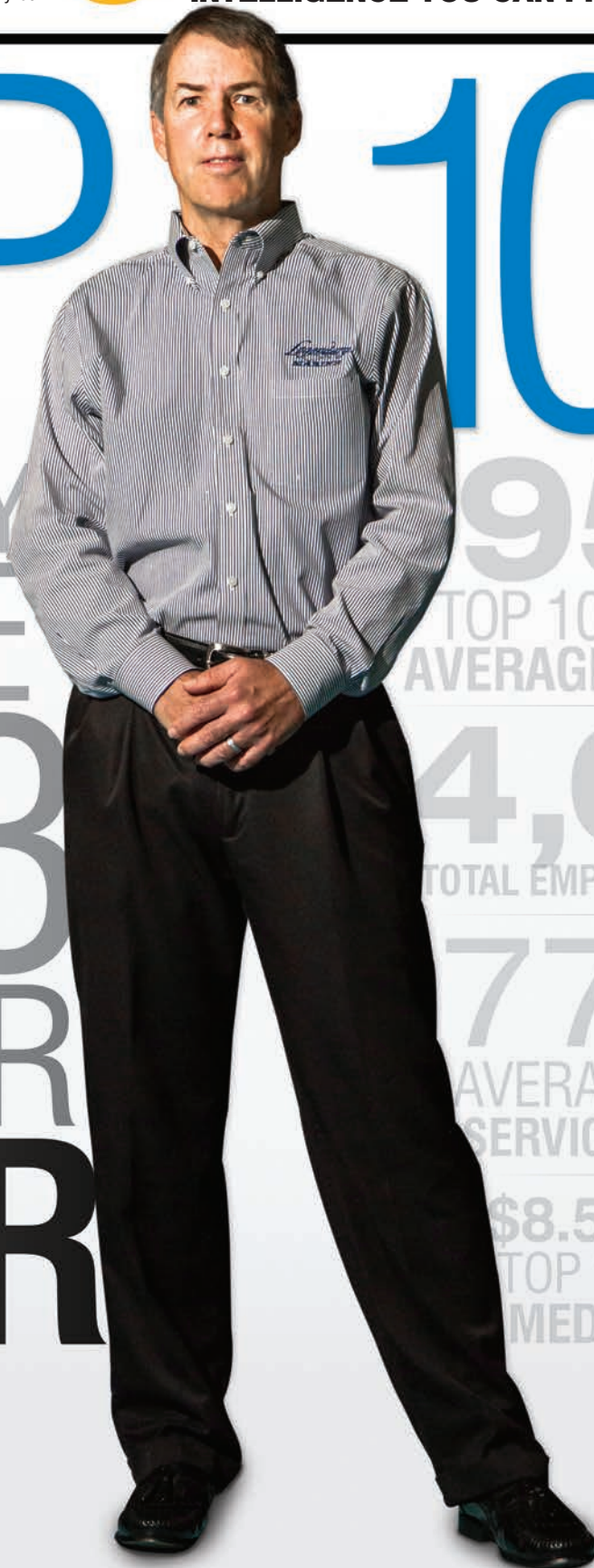
TOP 100

LEGENDARY
MARINE

2013

DEALER

of the
YEAR



95.4

TOP 100 DEALERS
AVERAGE CSI SCORE

4,031

TOTAL EMPLOYEES, UP 2.6%

77.7%

AVERAGE TOP 100
SERVICE EFFICIENCY

\$8.5 MILLION

TOP 100 DEALERS
MEDIAN REVENUE

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The 2013 Top 100 Dealers

BY BOATING INDUSTRY STAFF

*W*ith double-digit growth year-over-year, 2012 was the start of what will hopefully be a long period of growth and recovery for the marine industry.

And the Top 100 dealers continue to set the pace, with the average dealer increasing revenue by 11.2 percent in 2012 – off of a 15 percent increase in 2011. 2013 is shaping up to be a positive year for the Top 100 as well, based on early indications.

Of the Top 100 dealers, 87 increased revenue in 2012. The average net profit was up 9.6 percent. They sold more boats, sold more engines and hired more people.

As a group, the Top 100 and the Hall of Fame represents about \$1.8 billion in total revenue.

Those are just a few of the highlights of

this year's list – check out the following pages to see more of what sets the Top 100 apart.

This year's Top 100 process was also the most competitive in years. Applications increased by almost 15 percent from 2012. From the thousands of dealers in the industry, we received hundreds of nominations. The Top 100, along with our Dealer of the Year and Best in Class award winners, appear on the following pages.

Finally, a note on this year's ranking. We have ranked the Top 20 companies in North America from 1 to 20. This is a recognition of their elite status in the industry. The remaining 80 companies are simply recognized as being one of the Top 100 companies.

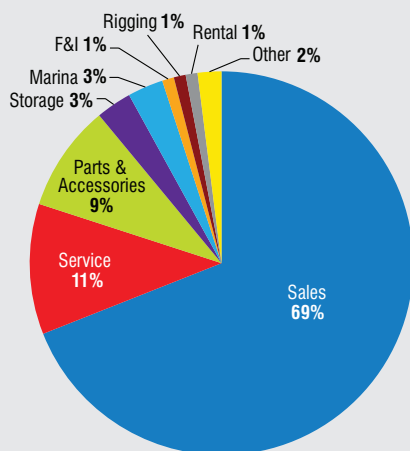
Read on to see the best of the best in the boating industry.

95.4

TOP 100 DEALERS AVERAGE CSI SCORE

REVENUE BREAKDOWN BY CATEGORY

HOW THE AVERAGE TOP 100 DEALER
MAKES ITS MONEY



“WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN KEEPING OUR SHOWS VERY CLEAN AND CLASSY. WE PLACE OURSELVES RIGHT NEXT TO OUR BIGGEST COMPETITOR AND LET OUR PRODUCTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.”

— CLAYTON RAVEN, BOAT TOWN



4,031

TOTAL EMPLOYEES, UP 2.6%



Parks Marina's Barefoot Bar is a waterfront destination for boaters and other tourists in Iowa's Great Lakes region.

17.8%

PERCENTAGE
OF SALES
GENERATED
THROUGH
BOAT SHOWS

77.7%

AVERAGE TOP 100
SERVICE EFFICIENCY



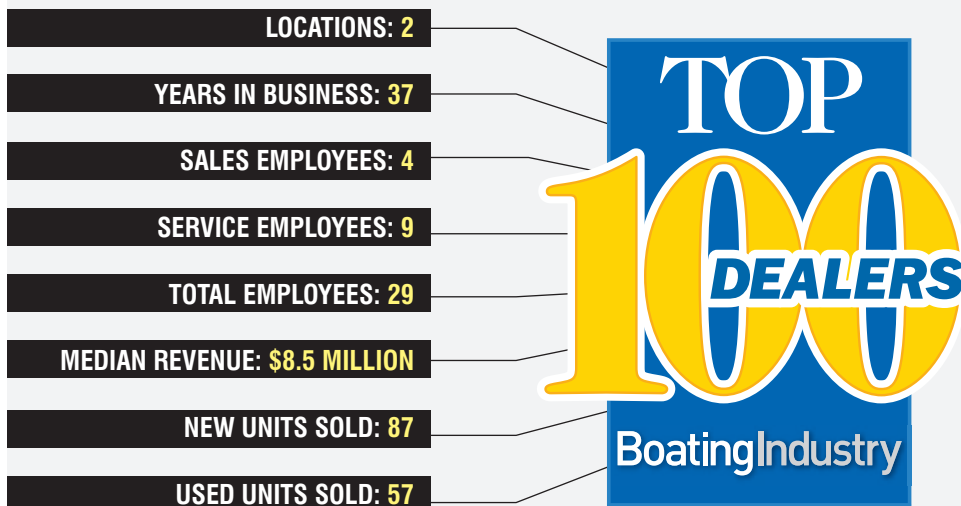
→ **87** OF THE TOP 100 DEALERS
INCREASED REVENUE IN 2012

→ THE TOP 100 HAD **\$1.1 BILLION**
IN TOTAL REVENUE IN 2012

→ **\$8.5 MILLION**
MEDIAN TOP 100 REVENUE, UP 11.2%

→ **5.7%**
AVERAGE NET PROFIT, UP 9.6%

THE AVERAGE TOP 100 DEALER



Gage Marine's annual December "Freeze for Life" cancer fundraiser draws hundreds to watch skiers, wakeboarders and more brave Lake Geneva's frigid waters.

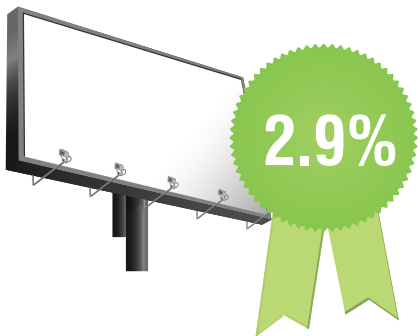
AVERAGE TOP 100 TURN RATE

NEW BOATS: 2.3

USED BOATS: 3.5

18,348 | boats sold in 2012, up 3.2%

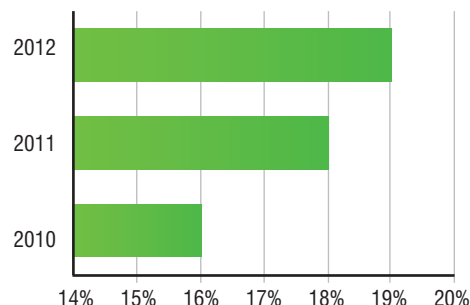
3,911 | engines sold in 2012, up 4.7%



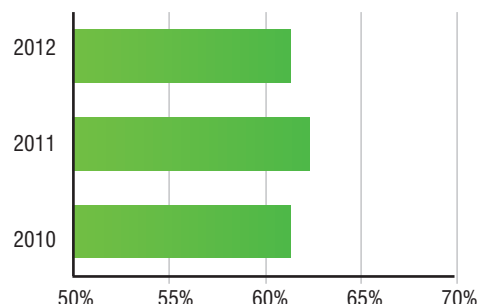
AVERAGE PERCENTAGE
OF REVENUE SPENT ON
MARKETING

GROSS PROFIT MARGINS

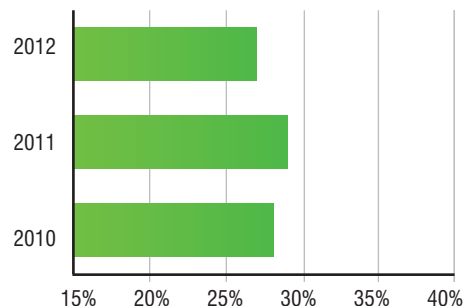
ON BOATS



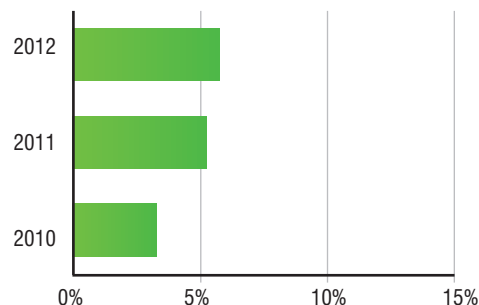
ON SERVICE



OVERALL



NET PROFIT



TOP 100 BOAT SALES, 2010 TO 2012

	2010	2011	2012
New I/O boats	3,481	4,011	3,663
New outboard boats	3,460	4,990	6,382
New inboard boats	953	2,718	1,226
New sailboats	25	35	65
Used I/O boats	3,411	3,789	3,455
Used outboard boats	1,654	1,125	2,569
Used inboard boats	852	1,086	967
Used sailboats	32	18	21
Total boats	13,868	17,772	18,348
Engines sold	2,309	3,735	3,911

TOP BOAT BRANDS

2013

1. BAYLINER
SEA RAY (TIE)
3. BENNINGTON
NAUTIQUE (TIE)
5. MASTERCRAFT
6. COBALT
REGAL (TIE)
8. CHAPARRAL
9. HARRIS FLOTEBOTE
10. BOSTON WHALER

2012

1. BAYLINER
SEA RAY (TIE)
3. BENNINGTON
4. COBALT
REGAL (TIE)
6. BOSTON WHALER
MASTERCRAFT (TIE)
8. CHAPARRAL
9. HARRIS FLOTEBOTE
YAMAHA WATERCRAFT (TIE)

*By # of Top 100 dealers that carry

TOP ENGINE BRANDS

2013

1. MERCURY MERCUISER
2. MERCURY OUTBOARD
3. YAMAHA
4. VOLVO PENTA
5. INDMAR
6. HONDA
7. PCM
8. EVINRUDE
9. MERCURY HIGH PERFORMANCE
10. CUMMINS / MOTORGUIDE (TIE)

2012

1. MERCURY MERCUISER
2. YAMAHA
3. VOLVO PENTA
4. MERCURY OUTBOARD
5. INDMAR
6. HONDA
7. EVINRUDE
8. PCM
9. CUMMINS
10. MAN / MERCURY HIGH PERFORMANCE (TIE)

*By # of Top 100 dealers that carry



Irwin Marine has added new brands to offer the greatest breadth of product offerings in its market.



“‘SERVICE IS OUR ONLY BUSINESS’ IS OUR MOTTO. ... WHEN YOU PLAN A VISIT TO THE LAKE GENEVA AREA, LET GAGE MARINE SERVE AS YOUR CONCIERGE.”

— WILLIAM GAGE, GAGE MARINE



As part of a large renovation, Off Shore Marine expanded its pro shop and redesigned the interior of the store.



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**VOLVO
PENTA**



LEGENDARY MARINE

In 2012, Legendary Marine wowed the *Boating Industry* team with its rapid growth and dedication to quality.

What we didn't expect was the wave of improvements Legendary made over the last year. Not content to rest on its laurels, the Destin, Fla.-based dealer implemented several new initiatives in 2012. It's a record that made it nearly impossible for us not to recognize Legendary as Top 100 Dealer of the Year for the second year in a row.

Culture of improvement

Focusing on constant improvement is an important part of Legendary's culture, said managing partner Fred Pace.

Every year, each division at Legendary is charged by the management team with reviewing every aspect of their operations and

finding specific ways to improve. Each division manager must report to the entire group at the company's annual retreat, sharing goals and tactics for the coming year. After the improvement plan is finalized, accountability measures are established – putting everyone on the same page with defined, measureable goals.

"We recognize that our business can change very quickly," Pace said. "It is important that we work every day to keep our business strong and likewise, to earn the right to be the dealership of choice for our customers and prospects alike. That requires that we continue to seek ways to improve all aspects of our business."

Legendary undertook many new programs in 2012, and improved others. Improvements ran the gamut from sales to service to marketing to customer relations.

One of the most notable is Legendary's Five Star Military VIP Program, started in late 2011. With seven bases within driving distance of Legendary's four dealerships, the military market is an obvious one for the company. The program offers special discounts and package offerings to active duty and retired military.

"With the advent of military base consolidation, we've seen 5,000 troops relocated to our area over the past year and a half alone," Pace said. "Our region not only has a wealth of active duty from every branch of service, but is a hotbed for retirees who find the mild temperatures, cost of living and military community appealing."

Legendary has formed partnerships with two charities – Fisher House and Bob Hope Enlisted Village – that benefit military families. For every boat sold to a member of the military, Legendary donates \$100 to one of the charities, resulting in thousands of dollars donated to date. The company also hosts several events on bases, including demo rides during base family days, fishing seminars and tournaments, and mini boat shows.

Beyond the boats sold to individual members of the military, Legendary has also sold fleets to base marina operators and won a four-year service contract for military recreational boats at the Destin Army Recreational Facility.

Many of Legendary's efforts have been focused on getting people on the water. To that end, Legendary launched the Legends Boating Club late in 2012.

While seen by some dealers as a potential competitor, Legendary saw the boat club as an opportunity to bring people into boating who would normally not participate in the sport.

"We have experienced some wonderful successes ... several people have joined who never would have entered boating through traditional channels; other former boaters who had left the lifestyle have returned due to the no-maintenance club format; and we've even had one new member convert to a new boat sale," Pace said.

With local competitor boat clubs offering older, refurbished models, Legendary saw an opportunity in featuring new 2013 models from its Cobalt, Sea Hunt and Hurricane lines.

"We believe the boat club is a good mix for our business and also makes good financial sense due to its positive impact on other aspects of our business," Pace said. "Our club owners buy fuel and other provisions. The club rents storage from the marina and compensates service for club boat maintenance. And our sales team has the opportunity to sell club boats at the end of the season as we invest in new 2014 models."

One of the deciding factors in finally deciding to take the boat club plunge was the success seen by other members of Legendary's Cobalt 20 group. It's just one of the many times being part of a 20 group has paid dividends for the dealership.

"It's one thing to casually know other successful dealers, but something altogether different when you can sit in a group of like-minded business owners where there are no sacred cows and everyone is there to help each other become better in their business," Pace said. "To be in a group where you can give and receive construc-

"We are constantly seeking ways to better serve and engage our customers and prospects, while becoming more profitable throughout the different areas of our operation."

– Fred Pace

tive criticisms, with all the barriers down, is an amazing experience."

Having the chance to learn from the other dealers in the group – many of whom are fixtures in the Top 100 – has played a significant role in the company's success.

"Specifically, the exchange of financial information and key processes with 19 top performers created a solid benchmark that resulted in major improvements," Pace said. "Legendary Marine has become far more profitable as a result of our participation in the Cobalt 20 Group."

There were several other improvements in 2012 including a new website, a new reception center, an enhanced CSI program, increased sales training and service department renovations.

Even Legendary's mistakes offer a learning opportunity. In 2011, Legendary had the opportunity to rent space in a Tampa marina in cooperation with an adjacent storage facility. While the facility was profitable, its location seven hours from the rest of Legendary's northwest Florida operations made management and customer service a challenge. In 2012, the management team made the decision to close it.

"Quite honestly, we didn't anticipate the impact the distance would have on our management team and manpower/resources," Pace said. "The time investment alone in setting up sales and service staffing and operations took a lot more time than anticipated. In our current market, we can travel to any of our locations and be home in the evening. Tampa was a two-day travel requirement."



Photo by Steven Mangum

As a major metro market, Tampa also made marketing and advertising more expensive than Legendary's other Gulf Coast markets, leaving less opportunity for potential growth.

Still, Legendary would consider future expansion in the right situation, Pace said.

"However, it would need to be within the Northwest geographic Gulf Coast market area in which we operate, with opportunity to represent many of our primary brands, and in a market size and scope that provides cost efficient marketing opportunities," he said.

With its second Dealer of the Year honor, Legendary will join our three Hall of Fame companies next year, but don't expect the innovation to stop any time soon. Improvement is a part of the Legendary DNA.

"We are constantly seeking ways to better serve and engage our customers and prospects, while becoming more profitable throughout the different areas of our operation," Pace said. "We have our eye on several new initiatives that we hope will improve our overall performance, while positively impacting the bottom line." ●



Rank	Company	Location	# of locations	Total employees (full time)	Year founded	# of boat brands	# of engine brands	Average technician efficiency	Average CSI score	Notable achievement
1	LEGENDARY MARINE	Destin, Fla.	6	135	2001	11	12	85	96	After winning Dealer of the Year in 2012, Legendary made several improvements to marketing, service and operations.
2	GORDY'S LAKEFRONT MARINE INC.	Fontana, Wis.	2	218	1955	2	3	92	98.18	Gordy's had its highest sales and most profitable year ever by focusing on business strategy, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction and profitability.
3	THE SAIL & SKI CENTER	Austin, Texas	4	83	1969	10	4	75	96.34	The Sail & Ski Center invested heavily in its displays, creating a modular system that had a contemporary look and was portable enough to use in boat shows as well as flexible enough use in its showrooms.
4	BUCKEYE MARINE	Bobcaygeon, Ontario	2	50	1949	7	6	75.3	96	Buckeye opened a second location, the Muskoka Boat Gallery, expanding into one of Ontario's most affluent cottage markets with its MasterCraft brand.
5	PARKS MARINA	Okoboji, Iowa	3	211	1983	10	4	67	93.9	Parks purchased 11 acres and an additional 345 feet of lakeshore adjacent to the dealership, adding new docks and more parking and picnic areas, with additional changes planned for the property.
6	RUSSELL MARINE LLC	Alexander City, Ala.	6	82	1959	15	6	71	94.67	Russell continued its team incentive bonus for all non-management and sales personnel, which has proven to be a huge success with revenue and inventory improvements in all categories.
7	SEATTLE BOAT COMPANY	Seattle	4	59	1984	5	5	101	98.75	Seattle Boat Co. added a boat club that continues to grow and delivered tremendous customer satisfaction and response after its first year and is expected to increase boating participation in the entire region.
8	STRONG'S MARINE LLC	Mattituck, N.Y.	7	58	1945	4	3	89.5	88.7	Strong's Marine began holding monthly day-long "Strategy Meetings" to develop further growth of the business. The meetings have resulted in numerous beneficial changes to the dealership.
9	PRIDE MARINE GROUP	Bracebridge, Ontario	8	94	1986	7	5	94.5	92.78	Pride purchased dealer Boatmax and its inventory in 2012, giving the company exposure to prospects and customers that boat on one of the biggest lakes in Ontario.
10	WOODARD MARINE INC.	Hydeville, Vt.	1	25	1960	10	4	111	99.17	After years of customer requests to borrow equipment, Woodard started the process of renting items that are not marine related such as generators, brush mowers and trash pumps.

KEY DND: Did not disclose



Rank	Company	Location	# of locations	Total employees (fulltime)	Year founded	# of boat brands	# of engine brands	Average technician efficiency	Average CSI score	Notable achievement
11	BOSUN'S MARINE INC.	Mashpee, Mass.	7	53	1985	8	7	77.7	100	Bosun's purchased a nearby competitor marina that was losing money and turned it into a profitable operation.
12	PORT HARBOR MARINE	South Portland, Maine	5	92	1965	14	4	79	92.48	Port Harbor completed its corporate restructuring to create a separate Holding Company, Real Estate and Rental LLCs, and an operating company S corporation.
13	RUSSO MARINE	Medford, Mass.	3	45	1940	5	4	70	95.68	Russo added Greenline Yachts, the industry's first, true hybrid production boat in three models: 33-, 40- and 48-foot solar/diesel/electric powered vessels.
14	QUALITY BOATS OF CLEARWATER INC.	Clearwater, Fla.	2	17	1973	4	2	73.5	91.08	With a good cash position, Quality Boats was able to and take creative trade-ins on new boats, such as vacant land, houses, condos, warehouses, RVs and more, resulting in increased sales in the larger boat segment.
15	M&P MERCURY SALES LTD.	Burnaby, British Columbia	4	43	1957	6	4	100	93.3	M&P put a greater emphasis on its social media presence. An outside firm was hired to assist with the effort, resulting in a more than 700-percent increase in new social media interactions.
16	AUSTIN BOATS & MOTORS INC.	Lakeway, Texas	1	21	1974	5	5	79.8	97.77	Using information garnered through its 20 Group membership, Austin Boats and Motors has made several improvements that increased sales margins and produced more operating income and bottom-line profits.
17	BMC BOATS	Longwood, Fla.	1	33	1998	7	3	100	91.5	BMC empowered a traditional Customer Service Representative person to become a Case Manager to handle all of its customer service issues, with authority to handle every customer service case until closed.
18	MARINE CONNECTION	West Palm Beach, Fla.	3	32	1987	6	5	90.47	98.86	Marine Connection worked with a new vendor to design a custom DMS that improves workflow by helping the dealership share its inventory across multiple platforms from its website to eBay.
19	HAMPTON WATERCRAFT AND MARINE	Hampton Bays, N.Y.	2	49	1990	7	12	85	93.63	Hampton Watercraft and Marine built on its video walk through initiative and created more "how to" videos to better suit its customers, as well as basic maintenance videos.
20	OAK HILL MARINA	Arnolds Park, Iowa	1	25	1990	8	6	87.8	97.25	Oak Hill's accounting department and owner met once a week to go over profit and loss statements, helping to make decisions in a timelier manner and establish sales goals, personal goals and company wide goals.

KEY DND: Did not disclose

BEST SERVICE DEPARTMENT

WOODARD MARINE

HYDEVILLE, VT.

Education, efficiency, innovation and customer service define the experience within the service department at Woodard Marine, a small-town dealership in western Vermont.

Owner Lauren Woodard-Splatt has focused much of her attention on its service department, encouraging constant tech training, tweaking its pricing structure, implementing green initiatives, adding a new bonus program and bringing tech seminars to the boat shows it attends.

She added that the dealership's seven-person service department is its pride and joy, and the entire team has worked diligently making a constant stream of improvements to ensure the operation "runs like a Swiss clock."

"Our technicians are all certified in the engine brands that we carry, and we feel our service department is the best in the Northeast," Woodard-Splatt said.

During the past year, Woodard implemented major initiatives within the department that have earned it this year's Best Service Department title. Even though it already had the highest labor rate in the surrounding Lake George district, the company felt its level of service justified the rate and raised it an additional 6 percent in 2012.

A new drive-through filtration system cleans toxins from boats using filters to remove the chemicals and store them in a holding tank so they don't drain into the water table.

One of the company's mantras is improving the business without spending money. With that in mind, Woodard Marine started a "Talk to the Techs" booth at boat shows, with a mini classroom with seating, TV presentations, an engine cutaway, damaged maintenance components compared with new parts and on-site service staff hosting



seminars during the show.

Techs provided basic maintenance tips and demonstrations on topics like ethanol and picking the right propeller, and booked appointments with a show discount. Aside from educating attendees, the initiative drove additional service business and reinforced the department's hands-on customer service with new and potential clients.

Training is a major focus at the dealership. While the dealership is currently not certified through the Marine Industry Certified Dealership Program, it achieved 5-star certification from 2005 through 2011. All technicians are annually certified through the Mercury's factory-lead Mercury University, the Honda Marine training center and the Yamaha Technical Academy. The company received recognition from Honda for the organization and efficiency of its service operation, and Woodard is currently seeking Clean Marine certification.

The service department's flat-rate pricing, another change for 2012, is intended to take away the fear of unexpected charges for customers, and the move has also increased profits. In addition, Woodard budgets \$5,000 every year to provide free minor repairs to customers already having major work completed. In the scheme of things, it's a small amount of money, but its use has increased repeat business and word of mouth – critical in a rural area.

To incentivize its tech staff, its bonus pro-

gram provides financial incentives to achieve and maintain all certifications on a yearly basis. Baseline techs receive 20 percent of the shop rate, while those fully certified receive 25 percent of the shop rate.

All of these efforts have borne fruit in incredible service metrics. By its own measure, there were only eight service returns throughout the last year – out of a total of 3,102 repair orders billed to customers. That equates to a quality rate of 99.7 percent. To maintain that level of quality, tech hours used to fix returns do not count toward billable hours or the bonus program.

Woodard's average technician efficiency, tracked weekly, monthly and annually, is an incredible 111 percent. That's partially due to its newly implemented paperless scheduling and dispatching system that's built into ADP Lightspeed. ADP's paperless system includes a dispatching system that assigns and schedules the jobs, and automatically emails the boat owner with a service survey that is eventually stored in the customer's file.

Its average CSI scores for sales and service of all its manufacturers is 99.17 percent, with flawless 100-percent ratings from Bayliner, Mercury, Honda, Yamaha and Godfrey.

All told, Woodard Marine estimates it has an 80 percent success rate converting service customers into new-unit buyers. And that may be its most important metric of all. ○

BEST MARKETING

BUCKEYE MARINE

BOBCAYGEON, ONTARIO

Buckeye Marine does many things well – you don’t reach the No. 4 spot on the Top 100 list without excelling at all aspects of the marine business.

But where Buckeye truly separates itself from the rest of the Top 100 is in the company’s marketing efforts. From its carefully developed (but always flexible) annual plan to excellent social media efforts and events, Buckeye stands out as the Best in Class.

Buckeye’s marketing starts with a plan developed every November in conjunction with budget planning. Methods, outlets and spending levels are adjusted based on the success or lack thereof in the previous year. The Buckeye team looks at five key factors when developing the annual plan:

1. Types of media, maximized by the season when they are most effective
2. Increase exposure, keeping the budget in check
3. Trim out inefficiencies/measure return on investment
4. Consistent messaging and branding
5. Focus on keeping customers and gaining new ones

That plan then guides – but doesn’t dictate – the marketing for the next year. It is adjusted as market conditions fluctuate or other changes occur, such as the opening of Buckeye’s second location in 2012.

“Our plan is just like a road map ... you know where you want to go and the way you want to get there but there is always the chance you may need to take a detour as the market dictates,” said Carly Poole, marketing coordinator. “We aren’t afraid to change gears and come up with creative ways to seize great exposure opportunities or solve problems as they arise.”

Buckeye carefully monitors its marketing spend to guide the planning process, tracking the cost and return for every medium.

“When creating our plan we scale back

in some areas where inefficiency was found given reporting from the prior year and ramp up in other areas as our economic and demographic landscape changes,” Poole said.

On all print media, Buckeye uses custom 800 numbers and a specialized call tracking system that allows the company to see where calls are coming from, duration of each call and the number which customers are calling as well as the number that they are calling from.

Buckeye monitors online traffic through Google Analytics, tracking sources, search engine optimization and keywords. Traffic on Facebook and other social media sites is tracked and analyzed as well, so Buckeye can see what posts are most popular and when visitors are reading its content.

“This reporting has proven to be invaluable as it lets us see changes that need to be made to our online media to take better advantage of it as well as telling us where we need to continue to advertise with third parties,” Poole said. “As an additional advantage, it gives us great demographic information that will work across all mediums.”

Buckeye hosted dozens of events in 2012 at its original Bobcaygeon location, as well as its new Muskoka Boat Gallery. Since 2011, all of Buckeye’s events have had a charity component.

“We have found event marketing to be a very successful way of branding Buckeye,” Poole said. “Because of the events we organize and promote, we are known for our community and industry philanthropy, customer appreciation and boating lifestyle enthusiasm. This is recognized by both our clients, prospective clients, the boating industry and the community.”

By working with other local businesses to support some of the events, Buckeye has also been able to keep costs lower and stretch its event marketing dollar. Buckeye has part-



nered with local car dealers, restaurants, sports stores and countless local nonprofits to execute its events.

Buckeye is also at the forefront of the marine industry with its digital marketing. The company recognizes that consumers are visiting a company’s website and checking them out on social media multiple times before ever entering the dealership. With that in mind, Buckeye updates content and inventory on a daily basis. The company launched its first mobile-enhanced site in 2009.

“We have built our website with the intention of providing a reliable and content-rich boating resource,” Poole said. “We know that our website is our company represented online and as such needs to be an adequate representation of the well-rounded, established and professional business that we run.”

Buckeye also makes extensive use of social media, with active accounts for both locations on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest and more.

“Overall, social media plays a great role in our marketing efforts,” Poole said. “It allows us to connect with our customers and allows potential clients to experience this interaction. For this reason social media is like word of mouth on steroids, and we know that it is an important growing and ever-changing medium that is of great importance to our business.” ○

BEST INDUSTRY ADVOCATE

PORT HARBOR MARINE

SOUTH PORTLAND, MAINE

You'd be hard-pressed to find a bigger proponent of boating, the boating lifestyle or the boating industry than Port Harbor Marine.

From working hard in industry associations to spreading the word about boating to consumers across the state of Maine, the team at Port Harbor has continually showed its willingness to further the entire industry.

Company President Rob Soucy is an active member of several industry and business groups and associations, both local and national. Port Harbor has been one of the biggest advocates of raising the professionalism of the industry through 20 Groups, Five Star Marine Dealer Certification, Spader 20 Groups, the Marine Dealer Conference and Expo and the Boating Industry Top 100.

Soucy is a member of the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas (MRAA) Board of Directors and chairman of the convention committee that plans MDCE, the largest dealer education event in the marine industry.

It's a tradition that goes back to Soucy's father, Bob, Port Harbor's founder. He owned and operated Port Harbor for more than 40 years before Rob and his brothers Mike and Marc purchased the business from their parents in 2007. Bob Soucy served as MRAA chairman and as a member of the association's board of directors for several years.

Beyond service, Port Harbor also works tirelessly as an ambassador of the boating lifestyle. Each year, Port Harbor hosts more than 25 events in and around its five Maine locations. While the ultimate goal of these events is to promote the Port Harbor brand, build customer loyalty and increase sales, they are also about introducing new custom-



"We host more boating events than any other dealer in New England but the best community related event and the one we are most proud of is our Veterans Appreciation Fishing Tournament."

— Rob Soucy

ers to boating and showing off the benefits of the sport. Port Harbor also supports many community service and charitable efforts.

"We host more boating events than any other dealer in New England but the best community related event and the one we are most proud of is our Veterans Appreciation Fishing Tournament," Soucy said. "Last year we organized this event that took over 100 U.S. veterans out on the water for a day of fishing and then treated them to a cookout and fish fry when they returned. The event was huge and paid dividends not only in the Maine community, but in our store as well."

Each Port Harbor location stuffs a boat full of food during Thanksgiving for the Good Shepherd Food Bank, then delivers

a literal boatload of toys at Christmas time for the Toys for Tots program.

Other programs aimed at children help to introduce boating to the next generation.

"Our Kids Safe Boating program is a free program run during National Marina Day for kids age 10 and older," Soucy said. "Kids get one hour of classroom instruction and then another hour on the water operating a boat. Every kid departs with several hand-outs, a DVD and boating safety manual, and a free life jacket."

Another event is the "Take a Kid Fishing" program that is designed to introduce kids to fishing and Port Harbor has donated fishing rods to kids for the last several years.

Port Harbor's second biggest community-related event was the Casco Bay Classic fishing tournament, "Fishing for the Cure," which raised more than \$75,000 to support several charities and combat amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease) and multiple sclerosis.

Port Harbor also participates in and runs several other events – including free boating classes, veteran events and more – that benefit the local community and promote the boating lifestyle.

"We make coming to work fun for our crewmembers that in turn project that fun atmosphere to our customers," Soucy said. "Sure, it is still work, but we never lose sight that we are in the boating business." ○



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BEST DIGITAL STRATEGY

MARINE
CONNECTION
WEST PALM BEACH, FLA.

There's no doubt that digital media has permeated our lives. A recent eMarketer study found the average U.S. adult spends more than five hours a day using digital devices for non-voice functions, and as we know, the Internet is the first place many go when looking to make a big-ticket purchase.

That's why it's more important than ever to have a strong digital strategy, and Marine Connection has proven it does. The southeast Florida dealership, with three locations, has excelled in digital promotion, and it has done so with marketing efforts that originate in-house.

Marine Connection's presence starts with its impressive website that, along with a backend inventory planning system, the dealership built itself. MarineConnection.com touts the company as "South Florida's #1 boat dealer," "#1 Hurricane Boat Dealer in Florida," and "South Florida's Exclusive Rinker boats dealer," catching a customer's attention from the start. It highlights the dealership's boat brands, with lifestyle photos from each line it carries. Inventory is also easy to find, with five featured boats – from those more affordable to higher-end vessels, and from new to used – displayed prominently on the homepage near the full inventory locator.

Inventory listings also include clear pricing (when available), detailed specs and information and numerous photos (with one pre-owned unit recently featuring 115). Buttons to "Ask a Question" or "Get Pre-Approved" are easy to find.

And Facebook, Twitter and YouTube links are always visible at the top of every navigable page.

Those social media sites are also where Marine Connection impresses its audience. With more than 1,100 Facebook fans and



more than 1,400 Twitter followers, Marine Connection provides its customers with a variety of photos and videos. The content not only promotes sales but also showcases deliveries in and out of the dealership, demonstrates new models and celebrates the boating lifestyle.

Many of the videos that appear on Marine Connection's Facebook and Twitter pages are those that come directly from the dealership's YouTube channel. YouTube is an area where Marine Connection particularly shines. New in-house videos are posted every few months, at a minimum. Sixteen have been posted in the past eleven months. Most videos are walkaround reviews of new or pre-owned boats in the dealership. Nearly all of them have at least a few hundred views, many have thousands, and the top view-getter has nearly 27,000 hits. In total, the MarineConnection.com YouTube channel has more than 700 subscribers and a shocking 1.5 million-plus views.

To produce the best videos and photos possible, the dealership in 2012 updated its

cameras, filters, Steadicams and software.

Marine Connection also reaches out to other sites to generate online traffic. The dealership pays for banner ads on BoatTrader.com and several boating forums. Striving for top ranking on Google, it also pays for Adwords, introduces fresh content to its website often and performs search engine optimization (SEO) services in-house.

But Marine Connection doesn't only choose these tactics and hope they work. Instead, the dealership carefully tracks analytics to measure ROI. Using Google Analytics measured weekly, staff can pinpoint exactly what source drove a customer to MarineConnection.com. Using unique, easy-to-remember URLs on TV commercials, Marine Connection can even track through the Internet how potential customers are receiving TV ads. And with all the recent efforts, MarineConnection.com traffic has increased steadily since July 2010.

Marine Connection has made it clear that it is making an impact with digital marketing, and the dealership shows no signs of slowing down. ○

BEST BOAT SHOW STRATEGY

RUSSELL MARINE

ALEXANDER CITY, ALA.

When Russell Marine saw its in-store traffic decreasing in 2010, the dealership did anything but sit back and wait for customers to walk in. Instead, it opted for a new philosophy, which has been morphing and improving ever since.

"In 2010, we had a shift in our marketing strategy for boats. We decided to take our boats to the consumer, rather than try to bring the consumer to our locations," president Dave Commander said.

The dealership now brings boats from its dealership to where customers are from January through April.

Show season kicks off with the Birmingham Boat Show in January. There, Russell Marine prides itself on its display – to which it added 4,000 square feet in 2011 – and the amount of traffic the exhibit attracts. In Birmingham, customers are guided to the boats by a large walkway. As Russell Marine has learned from the show, the dealership has also improved the booth, adding videos, lights, elaborate fixtures and new carpet. In 2011, a pro shop was included, bringing in significant added revenue for the dealership.

On the first night of the Birmingham show, which is a Thursday, Russell Marine hosts a VIP reception that includes a wakeboard giveaway, food prepared by a well-known chef and drinks. More than 200 potential customers attend each year. The attendance to that event and the show overall is boosted by the \$1,500 Russell Marine allocates each year for free tickets, which are mailed to leads.

Following the Birmingham show, Russell Marine hosts a series of Saturday Road Shows, during which 10 to 12 boats are brought to high-traffic areas across multiple markets in the region. 2012 show sites included a K-Mart, Piggly Wiggly grocery store, Academy Sports, Ryan's Creek, two different Costcos



and the Huntsville Civic Center. Most shows are advertised in the sports section of local newspapers, and traffic has been good, with more than a dozen boats being sold in one location for two years straight.

The Birmingham show and the Road Shows are designed to lead up to Russell Marine's own In-Water Boat Show, which set a sales record in 2012. With more than 60 boats in the water and another 60 on land, the late-April show attracts a large audience and has also garnered local media attention over the past several years.

Test drives are provided on all boats, and customers are also treated to paddleboard demos and a wakeboard "Big Air" contest. On Saturday night, Russell hosts a "house party" for inboard enthusiasts. The laidback event encourages customers to surf or wakeboard behind Centurion and Nautique models.

While Russell Marine has always hosted a Friday night VIP party before the In-Water Boat Show kicks off, in 2012, the format changed. What originally began as a thank-you party that attracted upwards of 1,000 current customers turned into what Commander described as "more of a shrimp eating contest than anything." Because boat sales weren't coming from the same crowd attending each year, Russell Marine moved

the party to a local country club and only invited those whom the dealership determined to be potential "A" customers. The new event, which included demos, led to several sales.

The dealership begins planning its show dates, action plans and employee responsibilities in August. Sales staff then completes online training from October through December, with two weeks of manufacturer training in January. In 2012, reps from eight of the dealership's boat brands stopped by Russell Marine to talk to the sales staff, and a one-day Don Cooper session was hosted, using tapes acquired from the consultant in 2011.

Once at the events, consumers are also surveyed, so the dealership can learn which marketing strategies drew them to the shows.

Russell Marine has reported such success over the past few years at shows on the road and back at its stores, that customers are again being groomed to go directly to the dealership itself, rather than waiting for show season.

"Our most effective sales strategy for boats has been to expose the public to Russell Marine and the brands we carry as much as possible through boat/road shows and carry this out with good planning and proper training," Commander said. ○

BEST TRAINING PROGRAM

COLORADO BOAT CENTER

JOHNSTOWN, COLO.

Being part of the Top 100 is about more than the bottom line. It takes not only financial success, but also a dedication to service, community involvement and the creation of a good place to work.

One of the most important factors in that facet of the business is the improvement and advancement opportunities dealerships provide their employees through a robust training program. In that regard, there are few companies that can compete with Colorado Boat Center.

“A business is only as good as the people who work it, making it a top priority that each staff member has the opportunity to refine their skills and can continue to grow themselves at a professional level,” said company vice president Nancy Smith. “Colorado Boat Center takes every measure possible to train employees on site, send them to schools, training seminars and various other activities that will expand their professional development.”

Colorado Boat Center invests thousands of dollars every year in training its employees on products, the latest service updates and more. The dealership pays all of the training fees, salaries and travel costs for employee training, a benefit that emphasizes the importance of the individual and their position, and the company’s desire to assist in their professional growth.

A well-educated employee leads to a better customer experience, Smith said.

“It is Colorado Boat Center’s ongoing goal to build awareness of the value of boating and thus increase potential revenue,” she said. “This can be achieved by continuing the dealership’s sound practice of training staff so they can in turn educate and service the consumer.”

Product training is important, but just as



crucial are lessons on customer service and time management. Each employee also receives cross-training within the different departments of the dealership, allowing for flexibility and a stronger team by broadening their awareness of what takes place in other departments and how it all fits together. During the offseason, Colorado Boat Center offers a mentoring program so that employees can observe another department’s workday.

“A service tech is never going to need cross-training in the administration area, but spending a couple of hours to visually experience that department’s workday creates a better understanding and appreciation for areas that some employees never have any contact with,” Smith said.

Every department is required to attend educational seminars every year, both external and internal:

SALES

The sales staff is required to attend annual manufacturers’ sales seminars, webinars and training classes. Colorado Boat Center also provides in-house training in the areas of sales, presentation, customer service and behavior identification. A library of sales publications and motivational products is also available for their use.

“All associates research the competition, both manufacturers and dealerships, in order to learn about the competitor’s products and business, so they can present the features of our products and services that set the dealership apart from the competition,” Smith said.

The sales staff meets with manufacturer and product sales reps several times during the year to keep up-to-date with the prod-

ucts and programs. It is mandatory that they participate in all available training.

SERVICE/RIGGING

Each service technician attends at least one manufacturer-sponsored training program annually. They are also required to attend regional and/or local training events, and factory service reps are asked to come into the dealership to spend time with the staff to update them on new products and techniques that will be useful.

The service department is also encouraged to utilize a full library of manuals, shop guides, videos and other reference materials to gain additional knowledge in their field. The rigging department is treated as an extension of the service department and receives a similar type of training, including manufacturers’ off-site programs.

PARTS & ACCESSORIES

Much of the training for the parts and accessories department is in-house.

“Customer service training is paramount because, together with the service writer, they are the face of the service department,” Smith said. “Role-playing and customer behavior situations provide additional training for better customer service.”

MANAGEMENT

Management receives in-house training that covers employee relations, customer service, policies and procedures. Management also attends the manufacturer training seminars and industry conferences, as well as specialty training for customer service and managing and motivating employees. ○

BEST CUSTOMER SERVICE

GORDY'S
LAKEFRONT
MARINE

FONTANA, WIS.

Located on the shores of tony Lake Geneva in southeast Wisconsin, Gordy's Lakefront Marine has remained family owned and operated since its inception in 1955, priding itself on consistently exceptional customer service. Between its dealership, marina, storage and rental businesses, bar, pro shop and Boat House restaurant, its staff of more than 200 seeks to provide guests a wonderful experience, even while waiting for a quote, service work or a dinner entrée.

"Since 1955, Gordy's has followed the motto of excellent customer service," said Rallee Chupich, service and hospitality manager at the company. "Focusing on this vision has led to the company's growth and success over the past 50-plus years. In this pursuit, we feel fortunate to have been honored over the years for our success."

Success in recent years has been steady, with \$1 million dollars in improvements during 2011 and more than \$3 million throughout 2012, the company's most profitable year. It has simultaneously reached record unit sales of new and used Cobalt and MasterCraft boats, while focusing its most recent investment dollars on adding 135 new wet slips and making improvements to its marina operations, seizing on an unexpected opportunity to increase its lake frontage.

Gordy's adamantly says its goal is to become the country's best marina and dealership within three to five years, and that it will get there by maintaining and improving its already high levels of customer service.

Its philosophy can be seen in the meticulous landscaping of its expansive grounds, valet and concierge services meant to take away hassles and a focus on the company's celebrated history. Gordy's staff is trained



to foster a relaxed, resort-style atmosphere, rather than that of a typical dealership or repair shop.

"Despite our growth," Rallee said, "one thing we will always cherish and remember is our long and storied history of our family, our friends and all the fun we have had together in boats."

Nowhere are the company's over-and-above tenets more evident than in the new boat delivery process, which is tailored to suit the needs of individual customers. It begins with the pre-delivery, on-water inspection by service staff. After clearance, a sales person formally introduces the delivery captain, who spends as much time as needed with every customer.

The captain guides customers through a Cobalt-specific delivery checklist covering all aspects of operation, features, warranty and techniques including parking on a lift, trailering the boat, safe boating tips and the use of all on-board systems. Small but significant extras include providing emergency training and contact information, and a delivery package that includes eight standard life jackets, four custom life jackets, gold braided dock lines, bumper fenders, a safety throw cushion and first aid kit in a large bag to keep it all organized.

In addition, all boats come filled with a full tank of premium fuel, as well as a quart of gear lube, engine oil, a \$50 gift certificate for the restaurant, a 20-percent-off certificate for

the pro shop and an iPod adaptor cable to use aboard the boat. Best of all, a final touch of appreciation is shown with a cooled bottle of champagne to celebrate.

Post-sale niceties include seven-days-a-week operation, training courses for skiers, tubers and wakeboarders, massive storage facilities, beautiful surroundings and a rental operation designed to keep all customers on the water, as well as introduce newcomers to the boating lifestyle.

Gordy's and its staff have a long list of achievements, including being a Cobalt Platinum Dealer and Cobalt Top 10 Dealer four years running.

Its year-to-date Mercury customer satisfaction index is 98.7, following a 98.57 score for 2012. Cobalt CSI scores consistently approach 98 percent. The company was also named Wisconsin Family Business of the Year in 2008 and 2010, and received *Boating Industry's* Best in Class award for the best service department in 2012 on top of being a member of the Top 100 for the last nine years.

By any measure, but especially in person, Gordy's Lakefront Marine has a well-earned reputation for providing its guests an unprecedented level of customer service.

"We [remind] employees and customers that their family experiences were priceless – life is about quality experiences," Chupich said. "Gordy's does not just sell boats; we make people boaters for life." ○

SPECIAL RECOGNITION:
HURRICANE SANDY RESPONSE

MARINEMAX AND STRONG'S MARINE

From its birth near the Dominican Republic on Oct. 24, 2012, to its direct hit of New York City on Halloween, Hurricane Sandy claimed 285 lives and caused approximately \$68 billion in damage during its nine-day assault of the Eastern Seaboard.

"Superstorm Sandy" was an all-out catastrophe – the second costliest hurricane in U.S. history – that flooded tunnels, streets and subway lines in New York City, and decimated piers, sand bars and boardwalks in the surrounding area. It also brought out the best of the marine industry.

As it came ashore in the dead of night, moving off the Atlantic from the southeast, Sandy saved her worst damage for New Jersey, New York City and Long Island – damaging or fully destroying several marinas, boatyards and dealerships along the way.

With many of their own homes damaged or flooded, employees of many marine businesses came together to help their employers clean up, quickly reopen and care for their customers' boats. Recovering from this storm wasn't just a matter of working overtime or doing dirty work, but a series of more dramatic, selfless acts that bonded teams, brought neighborhoods together and required quick, creative thinking to keep moving in the face of any business owner's worst nightmare.

With this in mind, *Boating Industry* commends everyone impacted by Sandy, with special recognition for Top 100 member Strong's Marine, and multi-location MarineMax, a Top 100 Hall of Fame member.

At Strong's, located near the tip of Long Island in Mattituck, N.Y., its staff went into over-

drive long before the storm arrived. Using its email newsletter, they reached out to clients with helpful tips and vital information before and after the storm.

"In times of need, Strong's service department delivers – we protect clients' boats when severe weather threatens, and our organization efficiently bounces back after severe weather events so we're there to assist with service or repair-related needs," said Strong's Bridget Rymer. "Due to a detailed procedure in place, our service department was able to pick up and haul a large number of boats prior to the storm hitting."

Its staff quickly and carefully prepared for the storm surge, which helped spare the dealership from the degree of devastation so many neighboring marinas faced. As a result of countless over-and-above efforts from its staff, Strong's was able to open back up just 48 hours after the storm and after more than two feet of water swept through its buildings.

MarineMax has 55 retail locations in total, 14 in the Northeast and seven that were damaged from the hurricane: Norwalk, Conn.; Chelsea Piers, Huntington and Lindenhurst, N.Y.; as well as Brant Beach, Brick and Ship Bottom in New Jersey.

The MarineMax Long Island & Lindenhurst Marina was its largest location impacted, with a 350-slip marina on 18 acres. MarineMax president of the Northeast region, Matthew Barbara, lives a short distance from the Lindenhurst store, and had a front-row seat for the storm and its aftermath.

"Lindenhurst was one of the areas that got hit really bad," Barbara said. "It was devastating to come here the next morning and not even be able to get down here, because the water was so high we had to actually get somebody's boat to come down the canal to see what was left."

With preparations made in advance, se-



curing customers' boats, tying down movable objects and securing office equipment up as high as possible, the storm's impact was dramatically worse than expected. Fences were destroyed, offices and boats were submerged, its shop was mutilated, and many of its piers were lifted out and away.

The next days weren't easy, clearing debris, contacting customers and trying to lock-in local contractors and electricians to commit to their rebuilding project, rather than another. MarineMax corporate stepped in with gift cards for the staff and financial assistance to secure deposits to get up and running as quickly as possible.

Staff members braved the journey to Lindenhurst, and the company used its 5,000-gallon gas tank to keep employees' cars and generators going during the subsequent gas shortage. Even neighbors and customers pitched in to do what they could, leaving Barbara and his team very grateful for everybody's efforts.

"We just tried to do the right thing for the team and appreciate what they were doing to help us rebuild the place," he said. "I think everybody's proud that overall it really came back to be a beautiful facility." ●

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Company	Location	# of locations	Total employees (full time)	Year founded	# of boat brands	# of engine brands	Average technician efficiency	Average CSI score	Notable achievement
ACTION WATER SPORTS	Hudsonville, Mich.	5	74	1990	4	3	75	100	Action Water Sports installed a new online scheduling system that allows customers to book service appointments online and automatically sends the confirmation, reminder and follow-up emails.
ADVANTAGE YACHT SALES	Newburyport, Mass.	3	8	2007	5	1	DND	DND	After entering the catamaran segment in 2011, Advantage continued to expand in 2012 by adding both Hobie Cats and Fountaine Pajot.
ALBERTA MARINE	Nanton, Alberta	1	22	2002	9	7	86.1	88.69	Alberta Marine took advantage of aggressive pricing by suppliers and service providers to save thousands of dollars by changing partners in several categories.
AMERICAN MARINE	La Crosse, Wis.	3	17	2001	10	4	79	79.67	American Marine added a loyalty program for those who do business with the company throughout the year that includes discounts on fuel, winter service and more, resulting in significant storage revenue growth.
BOAT TOWN INC.	Austin, Texas	2	21	1961	2	3	99	88.2	Boat Town reduced the size of its boat show space in half, reducing expenses 58 percent, and used the savings to run a series of successful private boat shows.
BOATERS EXCHANGE	Rockledge, Fla.	1	25	1997	5	9	DND	88.25	Boaters Exchange began a system of reputation management via follow-up calls, resulting in improved positive reviews online and raising the company's Google score.
BOATS INCORPORATED	Niantic, Conn.	1	29	1959	2	1	81.5	95.4	Boats Incorporated received national press coverage when the company purchased and released "Larry the Lobster," a 17-lb., 80-year-old lobster from a local restaurant.
BREATH'S BOATS & MOTORS	Bay St. Louis, Miss.	1	8	1925	6	2	60	98.93	Breath's focused on reaching out to current and potential customers by increasing its presence at regional boat shows, increasing total square footage by 400 percent and units sold by 40 percent.
CANNONS MARINA	Longboat Key, Fla.	1	18	1955	4	1	75	96.4	Cannons expanded and restructured its service department by adding a new service technician and appointing a service manager, freeing management to spend more time on sales.
CAUSEWAY MARINE SALES LLC	Manahawkin, N.J.	2	25	1984	2	6	82	98.86	Causeway utilized new lines of credit outside its regular floor plan, allowing it to take advantage of COD pricing discounts from its manufacturers and improve the bottom line.

KEY DND: Did not disclose



Company	Location	# of locations	Total employees (full time)	Year founded	# of boat brands	# of engine brands	Average technician efficiency	Average CSI score	Notable achievement
CLARK MARINE	Manchester, Maine	3	32	1958	3	6	91	100	In an effort to sell more high-margin full-service and storage packages, Clark Marine purchased a storage building and increased its storage capacity to 550 boats.
CLEVELAND BOAT CENTER	Cleveland, Tenn.	1	10	1972	5	6	81.4	100	Cleveland Boat Center renovated its showroom and invested in energy-efficient improvements, reducing costs and improving parts, accessories and pro shop sales.
COLORADO BOAT CENTER	Johnstown, Colo.	1	10	1990	5	6	58.6	98.67	Colorado Boat Center partnered with Priority One to handle F&I, increasing penetration by 18 percent and average net profit by hundreds of dollars per deal.
DAVEY MARINE	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	2	8	1977	3	5	75	100	Davey introduced a new consignment package that offered the client storage, re-listing options and new marketing tactics, increasing consignment boat sales by 70 percent.
DEEP CREEK MARINA	McHenry, Md.	6	36	2003	8	7	83	100	Deep Creek hired an in-house finance manager, allowing the dealership to get a better buy rate, complete deals more quickly and keep all deals in house.
DESMASDONS BOATWORKS	Pointe au Baril, Ontario	1	61	1946	6	3	85	98.06	In 2012, Desmasdon's emphasized education, giving its staff more opportunities to attend training courses, leading to more confident salespeople and service technicians.
DOCKSIDE MARINE	Montgomery, Texas	1	17	2003	6	7	60	87.59	Dockside made several changes to improve customer service, including establishing a new "Customer Satisfaction Manager" position, follow-up phone calls and emails and hiring more service technicians.
DON'S MARINE LLC	Lodi, Wis.	1	18	1936	4	6	89	99	Don's Marine implemented a new bonus structure plan for 2012 as part of a program to make sure its technicians stay on as part of a long-term profitable business.
DRI-PORT MARINE	O'Fallon, Mo.	1	8	1979	4	5	61	92.9	In 2012 Dri-Port Marine began to update its current image and marketing with a new more modern logo and a "bolder" look.
DRY DOCK MARINE CENTER	Angola, Ind.	1	23	1987	7	7	43.6	95.95	Dry Dock increased its focus on boating accessories, paddle boards, kayaks, increasing pro shop size and adding new lines, resulting in a 200-percent jump in sales.

KEY DND: Did not disclose



Company	Location	# of locations	Total employees (full time)	Year founded	# of boat brands	# of engine brands	Average technician efficiency	Average CSI score	Notable achievement
FARM ISLAND REPAIR AND MARINE	Aitkin, Minn.	1	9	2003	5	4	68	96.1	Farm Island Repair & Marine expanded and remodeled its showroom using a Small Business Administration loan, and completed the inside of its pole shed with cement floors and ceilings.
FOGARTY'S LAKE FLOWER MARINA	Saranac Lake, N.Y.	1	16	2001	4	2	100	90	Fogarty's purchased an online pro shop, leading to tremendous growth in water sports sales.
FUTRELL MARINE	Nashville, Ark.	3	41	1948	6	5	68	94.08	Futrell purchased a 15,000-square-foot warehouse near its current Hot Springs location that immediately allowed it to double winter storage capacity and generated an additional \$50,000 in revenue.
GAGE MARINE	Williams Bay, Wis.	5	323	1873	6	6	85	NA	A complete renovation of the Gage Marina in 2012 included the creation of a lakeside restaurant, which has greatly increased the marina traffic and interest in Gage Marine services.
GEORGE'S MARINE & SPORTS	Ottawa, Ontario	3	49	1969	10	4	68	91.25	With the loss of Sea-Doo boats, George's added Centurion Tow Boats and devoted more attention to its Regal line through specialized training for the sales team to educate customers on the value of a premium product.
GLENCOVE MARINA	Lake Ozark, Mo.	2	30	1984	1	3	109.1	DND	Glencove gained a highway location to increase exposure in town by purchasing a nearby boat broker facility that had been in business for 14 years and added the owner to its sales team.
GONE FISHIN' MARINE INC.	Dixon, Calif.	1	23	1997	12	5	96	92.3	Recognizing the potential for growth in its market, Gone Fishin' added a second, customizable pontoon line to go along with its existing entry-level product, allowing the dealership to capture previously lost customers.
GORDON BAY MARINE	Mactier, Ontario	2	70	1960	8	5	63.8	91.91	Gordon Bay remodeled its facility to create more space and improve flow in parts and service, relocated the warranty department to improve communications and moved its outdoor test tank to reduce noise.
HALL MARINE GROUP	Lake Wylie, S.C.	6	95	1976	9	5	64	92.19	After several years of outsourcing both F&I and marketing, Hall Marine Group brought both functions back in house to increase efficiency and improve performance.
HAYES MARINE	Appling, Ga.	1	12	2007	5	9	58	100	Hayes developed a relationship with a leadership coach to provide instruction on topics such as leadership, communication, interpersonal skills, marketing, sales, customer service and more.

KEY DND: Did not disclose



Company	Location	# of locations	Total employees (full time)	Year founded	# of boat brands	# of engine brands	Average technician efficiency	Average CSI score	Notable achievement
HURST MARINA LTD.	Manotick, Ontario	1	53	1976	5	5	63.2	99.3	In 2012, Hurst completed its two-year plan to accommodate larger boats by extending the length of its sales dock and completed landscaping of an area that was previously wasteland.
IRWIN MARINE	Laconia, N.H.	5	51	1919	10	6	68	95.47	After successfully adding a pontoon boat line in 2011, Irwin Marine expanded its offering with 23- to 25-foot boats with a partial third tube and a larger outboard motor, growing pontoon sales 260 percent.
KELLY'S PORT	Osage Beach, Mo.	2	46	1977	2	7	70	100	Kelly's Port started a gas discount system, offering a reduced price for preferred customers and cash payments, increasing gas sales and reducing fees paid to credit card companies.
LAKE UNION SEA RAY	Seattle	3	68	1986	6	3	80	92.42	Lake Union hired an online marketing company and invested in new ads, promoted posts and search engine optimization, resulting in a 30-percent increase in Web traffic.
LAKE VIKING MARINE INC.	Gallatin, Mo.	1	16	1988	2	4	65	96.04	Lake Viking launched a new website to give customers easier access to inventory and information on boat and engine brands.
LAUREL MARINA DEALERSHIP	Bristol, Tenn.	3	21	1950	5	4	41.8	100	Laurel Marina improved its efficiency and focus by streamlining the number of brands the dealership represents based on changing boating trends for tow boats and pontoons.
LEGEND BOATS	Whitefish, Ontario	2	63	1968	1	1	NA	83.84	Legend implemented new staff appreciation and reward programs, including creating an "Idea of the Month" program to encourage team members to provide feedback and be more engaged.
LODDER'S MARINE	Fairfield, Ohio	1	15	1966	5	4	52.1	92.05	Lodder's started a new monthly email marketing campaign using Constant Contact, resulting in a 31.2-percent increase in unique visitors to its website.
LYNNHAVEN MARINE	Virginia Beach, Va.	2	54	1977	6	7	76	93.3	Working with consultants and staff, Lynnhaven improved its social media presence and search engine optimization, resulting in more leads, name recognition and involvement with the community.
MAPLE CITY MARINE LTD.	Chatham, Ontario	1	35	1948	11	7	75	98.6	In 2012, Maple City Marine strived to simplify its business by limiting unnecessary logistics, outsourcing and supply chains and reducing its lineup by two boat lines.



Company	Location	# of locations	Total employees (full time)	Year founded	# of boat brands	# of engine brands	Average technician efficiency	Average CSI score	Notable achievement
MARINA FORTIN	St.-Paul Ile Aux Noix, Quebec	1	32	1955	2	6	98	100	Marina Fortin focused on improving its Web presence and social media efforts, showing significant improvement in its Klout and HubSpot scores and increasing revenue by 15 percent.
MARINE CENTER OF INDIANA	Indianapolis	1	20	2001	4	6	73	94.3	Marine Center of Indiana undertook major facility improvements, replacing lighting, upgrading HVAC and electronics and revamping its parking lot.
MARINE SALES OF PICKWICK	Counce, Tenn.	2	19	1974	6	4	88	100	Marine Sales of Pickwick became a Marine Industry Five Star Certified Dealer and created a clear and consistent written process for conducting business performance in all areas.
MARINE SPECIALTIES BOAT SALES & SERVICE	Sparks, Nev.	1	16	1974	4	4	56.9	97.5	Marine Specialties added parts bins for daily jobs, allowing service writers and/or parts manager to load the parts needed to complete a service job into a bin before the tech starts working on the boat.
MIAMI SKI NAUTIQUE INC.	Miami	4	26	1998	1	3	78	100	Working with a local university, Miami Ski Nautique implemented process mapping for boat sales, service, warranty and pro shop, resulting in an 18-percent increase in accuracy.
N3 BOATWORKS	Indianapolis	1	9	2008	1	1	130	96.67	N3 Boatworks completed a multi-year remodel of its existing showroom, two new sales offices, and the relocation and remodel of the parts department and service department were completed.
NORTH TEXAS MARINE	Gainesville, Texas	2	31	1954	5	5	90	97.65	Along with other dealers in the area, North Texas Marine spearheaded a movement to create The United Boat Dealers of North Texas to breathe new life into the local boat show.
OFF SHORE MARINE INC.	Branchville, N.J.	1	14	1986	7	6	47.6	DND	Off-Shore Marine upgraded its website to improve its look, make it more user friendly and allow for better tracking of the traffic visiting the site, delivering valuable data and information on promotion success.
OMAHA MARINE CENTER	Omaha, Neb.	1	24	1980	11	9	70	95.9	Omaha Marine Center diversified for the offseason by adding winter soft goods to its pro shop and purchased ski-tuning equipment and tuned more than 150 skis this past winter.
PARIS MARINE LTD.	Selwyn, Ontario	1	21	1947	6	6	80	91.19	To make sure all employees are trained to a single standard, Paris implemented a standardized orientation program for new and seasonal employees, which also encompassed a yearly refresher orientation for permanent employees.

KEY DND: Did not disclose



Company	Location	# of locations	Total employees (full time)	Year founded	# of boat brands	# of engine brands	Average technician efficiency	Average CSI score	Notable achievement
PAYNE MARINE LTD.	Pointe-au-Baril, Ontario	1	13	1961	4	2	100	100	By investing more advertising dollars targeted at existing clients and restructuring personnel, Payne Marine in 2012 significantly increased its gross sales with only a small increase in total expenses.
PORT SANDFIELD MARINA LTD.	Port Sandfield, Ontario	1	39	1952	3	6	90	98.29	Port Sandfield's "Dare to Compare" promotion displaying its boats next to competitor lines stimulated a great deal of interest and increased sales by pointing out competitive advantages.
POWER BOATS INC.	Hot Springs, Ark.	1	28	2001	3	7	74	96.5	Power Boats analyzed its part sales and managed inventory by making items available for sale on eBay, which in turn, increased revenue and decreased the inventory.
RAMBO MARINE INC	Hazel Green, Ala.	2	25	1987	3	4	68	100	Rambo Marine shifted its business systems to a cloud-based server, enabling employees to access documents, spec sheets and other materials from any mobile device anywhere.
RAYBURNS MARINE WORLD LTD.	Kelowna, British Columbia	2	44	1981	8	9	89	95.92	Rayburns focused on revamping every process within the organization to improve the systems in place, increasing its internal customer service stores and manufacturer CSI scores.
REED'S MARINE INC.	Delavan, Wis.	2	17	1952	4	2	DND	94.13	By adding a new pontoon brand and entry-level line and increasing its boat show presence, Reed's Marine increased new boat sales by 33 percent in 2012 over 2011.
REGAL & NAUTIQUE OF ORLANDO	Orlando, Fla.	1	13	2008	3	4	75.1	92.09	Regal & Nautique of Orlando hired a new service coordinator to improved the flow of the department. The change resulted in a 35-percent increase in revenue for the service department.
SEA RAY OF CINCINNATI & SEA RAY OF LOUISVILLE	Cincinnati	2	30	1947	6	4	65	100	The dealership improved its showroom by replacing outdated posters, adding new signage, purchasing new accessories, repainting, reorganizing to fit more boats and installing new carpet.
SHIPYARD MARINE	Green Bay, Wis.	2	17	1985	7	9	63	97.62	Shipyard opened its SHIPSHAPE Detailing Center, replacing a storage facility with a full service, state-of-the-art detailing center for boats, cars, SUVs and RVs.
SHORT'S MARINE INC.	Millsboro, Del.	5	63	1949	10	9	65.8	93.15	The hiring of a new general sales manager for Short's has resulted in a significant improvement in sales.

KEY DND: Did not disclose



Company	Location	# of locations	Total employees (full time)	Year founded	# of boat brands	# of engine brands	Average technician efficiency	Average CSI score	Notable achievement
SILVER SPRAY SPORTS INC.	Fenton, Mich.	1	17	1981	1	1	NA	98	Silver Spray renovated its main on-water building, added new docks and purchased six additional acres to expand its service and storage area.
SKI & SPORTS INC.	Rogers, Ark.	1	9	1989	6	4	75	100	In 2012, Ski & Sports continued its growth by adding five new boat lines in a variety of segments and the Yamaha outboard engine line.
SOUTH AUSTIN MARINE	Austin, Texas	2	27	1974	11	8	80.8	94.2	South Austin Marine improved its digital marketing by increasing its social media outreach and redesigning its website to improve navigation and make it more user friendly and appealing.
SOUTH FLORIDA MASTERCRAFT	Boynton Beach, Fla.	1	5	2001	2	6	90	93	South Florida Mastercraft added a pontoon line and expanded its pro shop to include accessories for the new line, Oakley sunglasses, Honu Sandals, Accurate ski ropes and handles, paddleboards and kayaks.
SOUTH SHORE MARINE	Huron, Ohio	1	38	1989	5	3	78	96.88	South Shore Marine increased its training budget by more than 40 percent and further emphasized its importance with employees by integrating signed training agreements into HR agreements.
SPICER'S BOAT CITY	Houghton Lake, Mich.	1	63	1964	9	3	101	84.67	Spicer's built a new 12,000-square-foot storage building on site to store more than 100 additional boats, increasing not only storage revenue but also winter service work.
SPRING BROOK MARINA INC.	Seneca, Ill.	2	17	1961	2	5	92	100	Spring Brook capitalized on the addition of a new line of small cruisers and yachts to immediately impact the bottom line and grow sales beyond its core customers.
STARBOARD MARINAS INC./STATE PARK MARINA	Branson, Mo.	3	89	1994	3	7	67	98.57	Starboard focused on growth, hiring additional boat sales and service staff, and investing more than \$1 million in docks and a new indoor lakefront showroom.
SUPERIOR BOAT REPAIR & SALES	Rancho Cordova, Calif.	1	11	2009	1	2	82	DND	Superior expanded to a new 4,200-square-foot, state of the art sales & service facility located along a busy highway with great visibility to support its expansion into a new boat line.
TEXAS MARINE	Beaumont, Texas	3	56	1980	6	3	70.5	NA	Texas Marine eliminated less profitable, slower turning brands which resulted in selling a similar amount of units but with higher gross sales, higher gross profit margins and better turns.

KEY DND: Did not disclose



Company	Location	# of locations	Total employees (full time)	Year founded	# of boat brands	# of engine brands	Average technician efficiency	Average CSI score	Notable achievement
THE BOAT SHOP	Tafton, Pa.	3	15	1958	5	4	85.4	100	The Boat Shop reorganized its showroom to create more pro shop space during the summer months, helping to increase pro shop sales by 18 percent.
THE GREAT OUTDOORS MARINE	Lavalette, W.Va.	1	23	1986	10	5	65	92.21	The Great Outdoors implemented a new DMS, allowing the dealership to integrate different departments in one system that can be accessed by the appropriate personnel on their computers.
THE SPORTSMAN	San Benito, Texas	1	11	1951	1	3	65	95	With its lone boat supplier unable to keep up with demand, The Sportsman increased its focus on other areas of the business and grew revenue across the board.
TOBLER MARINA	Hayden, Idaho	1	26	1962	8	8	NFP	NFP	Tobler added an "Ask the Pro" corner in its boat show to highlight the dealership's service expertise, generating new business and major repairs during a slow service time of the year.
TOWN & COUNTRY MARINE	Lakefield, Ontario	2	31	1982	5	4	108	93.05	Town & Country continues to maintain and expand a series of offsite "fun on the water" programs educating the public on the family benefits of boating, offered at no cost to the consumer.
TRAVERSE BAY MARINE INC.	Traverse City, Mich.	1	23	1975	9	8	94	DND	Traverse Bay became a Brunswick "Next Generation" Master Dealer, becoming only the second Brunswick dealer in the country to obtain this certification level.
VALLELY SPORT & MARINE	Bismarck, N.D.	2	33	1974	11	5	47.2	92.53	Vallely purchased iPads for all employees, loaded with manufacturer applications so customers can be shown pictures, videos, and all other information on the spot, as well as access to all inventory and pictures on the iPads.
WAKESIDE MARINE LLC	Elkhart, Ind.	1	17	2002	4	4	68	77.38	WakeSide acquired eight acres of land at a significant discount to market value and used the improved equity position to refinance its mortgage and pay off all of its debt in the operating company except floorplan for new boats.
WAYZATA MARINE	Wayzata, Minn.	2	17	1967	4	2	73.7	90	Wayzata focused on "right sizing" the company to match the current local market, resulting in a substantial increase in boat storage and service receipts replacing lost income from sales.
WHITE LAKE MARINE	White Lake, N.C.	1	10	1955	3	2	100	97.78	White Lake added full time order processors to handle increased sales and productivity of its Web store, which provides Nautique parts worldwide and has grown to multi-million dollar business.

KEY DND: Did not disclose

EDITORS' CHOICE

GEORGE'S MARINE & SPORTS

OTTAWA



JONATHAN SWEET

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Jsweet@boatingindustry.com

WITH TWO OF ITS BOAT LINES announcing significant changes in 2012, it was sure to be a year of transition for George's Marine & Sports.

Despite that, the Ottawa boat dealer made sure it stayed focused on the service and innovation that has made it successful.

First came the news that BRP was dropping its Sea-Doo sport boats – a top seller at George's Marine & Sports.

“Having this volume producing product line removed from our lineup of boats was not an easy pill to swallow,” said company president Jeff Wilcox. “We knew we must replace these sales with some other product or increase the sales within the product lines we are already stocking.”

The George's team decided to take a two-pronged approach to replacing the Sea-Doo sales: adding Centurion Tow Boats and devoting more attention to its existing Regal line.

“We believe both the Regal and Centurion models we have stocked will have no problem in replacing and exceeding the Sea-Doo sport boat volume we'd be missing,” Wilcox said.

Shortly after the BRP news came Bayliner's announcement that the company was going to stop producing cruisers in North America. This time, the dealership took the opportunity to focus more attention on its Regal cruisers rather than add any additional options.

“It would be much easier and more profitable to have only one single cruiser line than trying to focus on multiple lines in a shrinking big boat market,” Wilcox said. “We knew Regal was an already proven success in the area and our plans were already in place to increase sales due to the elimination of Sea-Doo sport boats. Another advantage of not adding an additional manufacturer meant we could reduce the product and interest expenses that can result in quite a bit of money when talking about large boats.”

Those choices shouldn't be surprising,

as a theme that runs through George's Marine & Sports is a clear dedication to quality. Few companies can match the dealership's passion for creating a positive customer experience.

“This is the area that keeps our customers coming back, and the quality of service must never be sacrificed whether through training or simply just caring,” Wilcox said. “We realize our customers have the power of choice and we do not want to give them a reason to even consider another choice.”

With a specialized department now dedicated to customer service, along with a warranty administrator, George's has been steadily improving CSI scores. Even with dedicated customer service employees, every team member is empowered (and trained) to handle customer complaints themselves. The staff is allowed to credit up to \$500 without management approval.

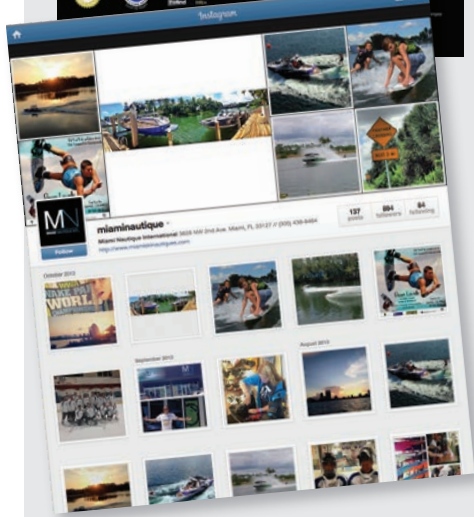
“We expect our staff to respond to complaints immediately upon knowing they exist and if possible resolve them immediately or a minimum of 24 hours,” Wilcox said. “If the issue cannot be resolved in 24 hours then the employee is required to update the customer on a daily basis (or more if required) along with their manager. The more we empower our staff the more responsibility they take for their actions.”

Employee training is a key part of creating a culture where employees feel confident in solving problems themselves. That's another important area of emphasis for George's Marine & Sports, as the company spends thousands of dollars a year training its employees.

“When we invest in staff training, we want the best and we also don't want it to be forgotten a few weeks after the training has been completed,” Wilcox said. “Training is about changing the status quo and improving on what we do to make it better, save time and save money.” ○

MIAMI SKI NAUTIQUE

MIAMI



TOM KAISER

SENIOR EDITOR

Tkaiser@boatingindustry.com

EVERYTHING about Miami Ski Nautique is different. A black-skinned, avant-garde building with bold graphics nods to the city's nearby art and design districts, matching web locations show off brightly colored boats and water sports equipment, and this athlete-centric dealer's business extends far beyond the borders of the United States with a fast-growing presence in Latin America. More than a business, closer to the nucleus of an athletic lifestyle, Miami Ski Nautique demonstrates a unique attitude boosting boating's cool factor, elevating water sports and bringing new enthusiasts into the marine industry.

Miami Ski Nautique's Instagram page displays beautiful images of high-performance boats towing athletes in exotic locations and sponsored athletes celebrating on the podium. Its YouTube channel shows athletes "ripping a session" and reviewing product, with how-to videos for budding enthusiasts. The company's Twitter page has nearly 500 followers, with the right mix between fun content and sales messaging. Its Facebook page has followers sharing competition videos and posting rave reviews about the shop and its staff. The official website looks more like a gear manufacturer's, with its minimal, youthful design.

"Our social media strategy is a heavily involved and integrated process, aimed at connecting, engaging, interacting and communicating with our key customers worldwide," said Kimberly Laursen, Miami Ski Nautique's co-owner and president. "While our social media efforts are primarily geared towards sharing the brand lifestyle we've created, we also monetize our efforts by offering our fans exclusive discounts. Our strong social media presence has attracted many brand ambassadors that genuinely promote our brand, our service and our products."

Its 4,000-square-foot sales and service center was recently renovated with the feedback of Parker Marine Consulting. The adjacent pro shop has black walls and high-energy graphics to complement its Midtown Miami surroundings, and is

staffed by several athletes who can relate to its customers. A satellite location in Pompano Beach sits on a freshwater lake where the company sponsors Dean Lavelle's Train Station wakeboarding school that frequently trains students from across the globe. There's also a lake within 45 minutes of both locations used as a testing facility and playground where customers can test drive boats or attend water sports classes. It will soon be home to a large-scale cable park built in conjunction with the Miami Dade County Parks and Recreation Department.

Miami Ski Nautique is the top-selling Nautique dealer in South Florida and South America, with an e-commerce business that's been growing approximately 30 percent a year.

The company regularly travels south to boat and water sports events in Latin America, focused on increasing awareness wherever it goes. It has represented Florida Governor Rick Scott's Enterprise Florida international economic development initiative at business expos throughout the region.

If customer satisfaction is any reflection, Miami Ski Nautique's merging of lifestyle and retail has been successful, with CSI scores from Nautique consistently between 95 and 100 percent, on top of achieving Nautique's Top 5 domestic and international dealer recognitions many times over.

The company posted a healthy jump in revenue over 2011, to nearly \$8 million. It's also worth noting that more than 80 percent of its in-store sales come from people outside of the United States, a staggering number bolstered by a multilingual staff that collectively speaks eight different languages.

"Most of our employees compete and are internationally ranked," said Laursen. "They live the sport, intimately know the products and share the passion. Being immersed in the sport gives our staff more credibility with our customers, so we are better able to provide excellent customer service due to a shared passion and a common language." ○

THE BOAT SHOP

TAFTON, PA



THE BOAT SHOP may not be the biggest dealership in the country – it's not in the highest revenue bracket; it has fewer than 15 employees, and it only has one location – but what the dealership lacks in size, it makes up for in heart and hard work.

"We are never 'the best,' and can always do a little better," vice president Roy Finney Jr. said. "We are proud of our accomplishments and where we have been, but also know that where we have been is merely the foundation for where we want to go."

The business is based on the foundation of a family tradition of boating so engrained in the Finneys that Roy Jr. reports boating has become a part of them, not just a hobby. Roy Sr. grew up on the lake and is still found out on the water, often with his extended family. His son, Roy Jr., is continuing that tradition, racking up the hours on his boat annually.

But the 55-year-old dealership isn't run simply on passion; it's also run on business acumen, as the company rejects the tendency to do things because they've always been done a certain way and instead focuses on moving forward and improving.

That refusal to live with status quo showed in 2012 when The Boat Shop hosted employee and consumer focus groups and mailed customer surveys, aimed at learning how the business could improve.

As a result of that polling, the dealership added tags to each boat in the service department, explaining who worked on it and when, and focused its advertising on customer needs. The Boat Shop also cleared up miscommunication about which detail package customers were purchasing, leading to better customer satisfaction.

A referral rewards program was also launched, giving customers who referred new prospects store credit. The program resulted in the sales of multiple boats to new leads, and, as an added bonus, the customers who received rewards often bought other products from The Boat Shop during the same trip.

Because of those and other successful sales strategies, The Boat Shop saw sizeable revenue and sales increases across the board

in boat sizes in 2012.

The Boat Shop also found success in the pre-owned market, as it worked to increase profit and diversify its selection. Trade-in criteria were expanded, and consignment policies reworked. In improving its pre-owned inventory, The Boat Shop introduced itself to a more budget-conscious buyer who wouldn't have normally been exposed to the dealership, and slip rental and storage revenue increased. Margins have also been impressive, and some used boat buyers have already returned to upgrade to more expensive models.

Another boost to used unit sales was the purchase of storm-damaged boats from insurance companies. Serving as filler jobs for techs, the boats were repaired and sold to customers at high margins.

But The Boat Shop didn't focus solely on unit sales in 2012. The dealership's pro shop was expanded, adding product including Connelly Stand Up Paddle Boards and increasing sales significantly.

The service department pay structure was also overhauled. After experimenting with different pay plans in 2010 and 2011, The Boat Shop finally landed on one that worked for the dealership and its technicians, paying them hourly, with monthly efficiency and bi-yearly profitability bonuses of extra pay and vacation days.

Though not new for 2012, The Boat Shop's dedication to customer service and welcoming its buyers into its family make the dealership stick out as something special. Among its list of customer services is emergency repair service, a rental program, wakeboard and waterski lessons, and, for service customers, free loaner boats, pick and up and delivery and cleaning and bottom wash. Those services have continued through the years and show The Boat Shop's commitment to loyalty.

"No, we are not the biggest dealership out there, or the flashiest, but we show our individuality in every facet, and on a local, or even national scale, our individuality will stand out. We are family, we are boaters, and in the end we are The Boat Shop," Finney Jr. said. ●



LIZ KEENER
MANAGING EDITOR
lkeener@boatingindustry.com

PRINCE WILLIAM MARINE

Prince William Marine was already told two years in a row that it was the top dealership in North America, and yet the company continues its drive to be the best.

The Hall of Fame member continued to innovate in 2012, as it also reinforced the attitude that had taken it to Number 1 in 2010 and 2011.

"Each year we strive to update and improve at the marina as well as to improve our internal processes to provide the best customer experience possible," said General Manager Michele Price.

New to the Woodbridge, Va., dealership were "street signs" created for the marina docks and boardwalks, naming each dock and creating a neighborhood feel. The change has already led to customers referring to their docks by the street names, rather than just the dock letter. Another capital improvement was the addition of LED white rope lighting to the top of all the Prince William buildings, improving the campus' appearance and drawing attention to the dealership from Interstate 95.

Catching the gaze of on-lookers was also the goal of a towable boat show billboard the

dealership built. A 20-by-10-foot sign was attached to an old boat trailer, which was then driven around Prince William's market area to attract traffic to its fall boat show. The initiative seemed to work, with a number of boat show attendees reporting they had learned about the event by seeing the billboard. Following that success, the dealership began changing the sign for different events and shows it wants to advertise. When the mobile billboard is not on the road, Prince William often parks it at local malls and shopping areas for added exposure.

Another change Prince William made in 2012 was to better focus its in-house maintenance classes offered to customers. The classes were growing in popularity, which was great, but the group was getting too diverse, and the dealership felt participants would be better served attending classes that catered more to their boating uses. The dealership then decided to split the classes into three rotating categories: Sport/Trailer, Sport Cruiser/Sport Yacht and Diesel.

"This has created more interactive classes and more specific detail classes because we can take the time to concentrate on the

things most important to the particular boating group," Price said.

Online, Price William launched CheapPowerboats.net, showcasing the dealership's discounted boats. It's starting to gain traction, and boats are being added on a regular basis.

Salespeople at the dealership were allowed to try some of their own strategies to bring in customers and close deals. One salesman, started a boating group on Facebook, encouraging camaraderie among local boaters. Another began giving his cell phone number to customers, allowing them to call any time before 9 p.m., giving those prospects time to ask questions on their schedule. The sales team also began sending emails to potential buyers, linking customers to the website to see the 10 to 20 photos posted of each unit, and referring them to events, yacht club photos, webcams and, when appropriate, the finance page.

"We don't just sell boats like it is a thing," Price said. "We help develop their interest and desire, then support their having fun with family and friends in their boat on the water." ○

MARINEMAX

As the first-ever *Boating Industry* Top 100 Dealer of the Year, MarineMax set the standard by which all future winners would be judged with its innovation and growth strategy.

And since becoming the inaugural member of the Top 100 Hall of Fame, the Clearwater, Fla.-based marine retail giant has continued to adapt to a changing industry.

MarineMax has faced numerous challenges from closing locations during the recession to dropping underperforming brands and cutting staff. Now, MarineMax has stabilized its operations at 55 retail locations, up

from 53 in 2012, and added employees.

In 2012 and 2013, MarineMax launched a major new initiative, with President and CEO Bill McGill challenging the company to focus on the "Why" of boating and the boating lifestyle rather than the price of a boat.

"We know that boating is more than the purchase of a boat," McGill said. "We know it's a lifestyle that our customers choose to lead and we nurture that lifestyle with our premium products, Getaways! trips, educational classes and more."

It was a wholesale rethinking of how

MarineMax sells and markets its boats – and who the competition is.

"With this shift of focus came many fundamental changes," McGill said. "Rather than looking to our competitive dealers, MarineMax chose to instead look at our competitive lifestyles, the other activities and hobbies people do instead of boating."

Following this shift, MarineMax also refocused its marketing. Over six months, MarineMax planned a new strategy around the tagline "United by Water." The company's new website and all of its marketing efforts are

now organized around four lifestyles, focusing on the activity, not the product: Yachting, Fishing, Leisure and Watersports.

"We have made it easy for visitors to find their perfect boat by picking the lifestyle that best suits them and their families," McGill said.

As part of that reorganization, MarineMax also moved its marketing team in-house, growing from three to 14 team members. The change allowed the team to offer more support to the 55 retail locations, as well as focus on delivering the new "lifestyle" message across a variety of platforms, especially social media.

"We know that our customers and prospects lead very busy lives and the Internet is an excellent tool for us to meet their lifestyle

needs," McGill said. "By using social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, as well as building our own online social platform on the new MarineMax.com, customers are able to share their boating experience, access information and learn about the advantages that come with the MarineMax brand."

MarineMax also implemented a new boat show strategy for the dozens it exhibits in across the country, introducing the MarineMax Experience Theater. MarineMax set up a theater within its boat show booths, giving attendees the chance to watch videos about the MarineMax and boating lifestyles.

"The new format focused not only on the product, but the lifestyle of owning a boat, and

drew many people into our booths that otherwise may not have stopped," McGill said.

Finally, MarineMax continued its efforts to make the boating lifestyle as easy and enjoyable as possible. The company offered a variety of free classes and continued to grow its MarineMax Getaways! special events. The new "single, straight-forward price" incorporates all discounts upfront, making it easier for buyers.

"As in the past, we are still making strides to grow the market for new boaters," McGill said. "While engaging our current owners, we also are excited about affordable new products such as the Bayliner Element that will help those that are new to boating realize it's an easy and fun hobby that anyone can do." ○

GALATI YACHT SALES

Staying at the top of its game at Galati Yacht Sales means continuing to focus on low-cost, high-value tactics that helped it weather the recession, growing its physical presence, embracing new technology to improve efficiency, thinking globally about its customers' lifestyles, and finding new ways to connect online and have fun with customers in person.

Florida-based Galati is a former Dealer of the Year from 2007 and 2008, with eight locations: one each in Texas, Alabama, Costa Rica and Michigan and four in its home state. A few of its facilities received major attention in 2012, starting with moving its Texas location from Houston to Galveston, where it can now serve both the Houston and Austin metro areas.

Galati invested in its Destin location's service department in many ways, including buying a new 50-ton lift that's intended to improve profitability and efficiency. That spring, the company also began construction at its Anna Maria facility, adding a high-end waterfront restaurant that will overlook the marina with attached sales offices and meeting rooms. Its Tampa Bay location also saw significant investment in its sales and service buildings, including new roofs and

overdue interior renovations.

The company's biggest change came as part of the company's north/south connection. Recognizing that many of its southern customers have second homes in the Great Lakes region was the impetus for adding the Holland, Mich., location in 2011 so its snowbird customers could have a "one-source option for their boating needs."

For 2012, Galati doubled down on this migratory strategy by opening a second office in the state, this time in the far eastern part of Michigan northeast of Detroit on Lake St. Clair's Anchor Bay.

"We have now been officially open for two years in Michigan and are finding out the value of the Galati reputation as we secure quality listings," said Galati Operations Manager Gayle Niedenfuer.

Beyond brick and mortar projects, the company moved shared documents to Dropbox, a cloud-based system where its brokers could access key information, like price sheets and brokerage sales contracts, from any connected device.

Its new captain's blog, boat shopper and brand finder features on its website, as well as efforts to broaden the reach of its social media and improve SEO ranking, have all

been intended to better connect with customers. As a happy byproduct, the company has seen an increase in appointments with its brokers.

Galati has also put itself in front of its customers more frequently at its Rendezvous and fishing tournaments, as well as boat shows. It attended a staggering 21 shows during 2012, but that meant implementing new efforts to reduce expenses without lowering its standard of excellence at the shows.

"We remained focused on using our internal resources for the boat show events and lessened our expenses exponentially while maintaining our high standards for exhibiting," Niedenfuer said. "This was accomplished by many hours of strategic planning and working with our show promoters to support our continued cost reduction efforts."

In the wider scope of this family business' history, Galati welcomed the third generation of its family to the business. Angela Jackson, daughter of Fran Galati, graduated from the University of South Florida and joined its marketing department. Michael Galati, son of Carmine Galati, graduated from the University of Mississippi and joined the company's sales team. ●

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Marine Specialties Boat
Sales & Service
Miami Ski Nautique, Inc. (DBA
Miami Nautique International)
N3 Boatworks
North Texas Marine
Oak Hill Marina
Off Shore Marine, Inc.
Omaha Marine Center
Paris Marine Ltd.
Parks Marina
Payne Marine Ltd.
Port Harbor Marine
Port Sandfield Marina Ltd.
Power Boats Inc.
Pride Marine Group
Quality Boats of Clearwater, Inc.
Rambo Marine, Inc.
Rayburns Marine World Ltd.
Reed's Marine, Inc.

Regal & Nautique of Orlando
Russell Marine LLC
Russo Marine
Sea Ray of Cincinnati &
Sea Ray of Louisville
Seattle Boat Company
Shipyard Marine
Short's Marine, Inc.
Silver Spray Sports, Inc.
Ski & Sports, Inc.
South Austin Marine
South Florida Mastercraft
South Shore Marine
Spicer's Boat City
Spring Brook Marina, Inc.
Starboard Marinas Inc.
Strong's Marine, LLC
Superior Boat Repair & Sales
Texas Marine
The Boat Shop
The Great Outdoors Marine
The Sail & Ski Center
The Sportsman
Tobler Marina
Town & Country Marine
Traverse Bay Marine, Inc.
Valley Sport & Marine
WakeSide Marine, LLC
Wayzata Marine
White Lake Marine
Woodard Marine Inc.

TOP 100 HALL OF FAME

Galati Yacht Sales
MarineMax, Inc.
Prince William Marine Sales