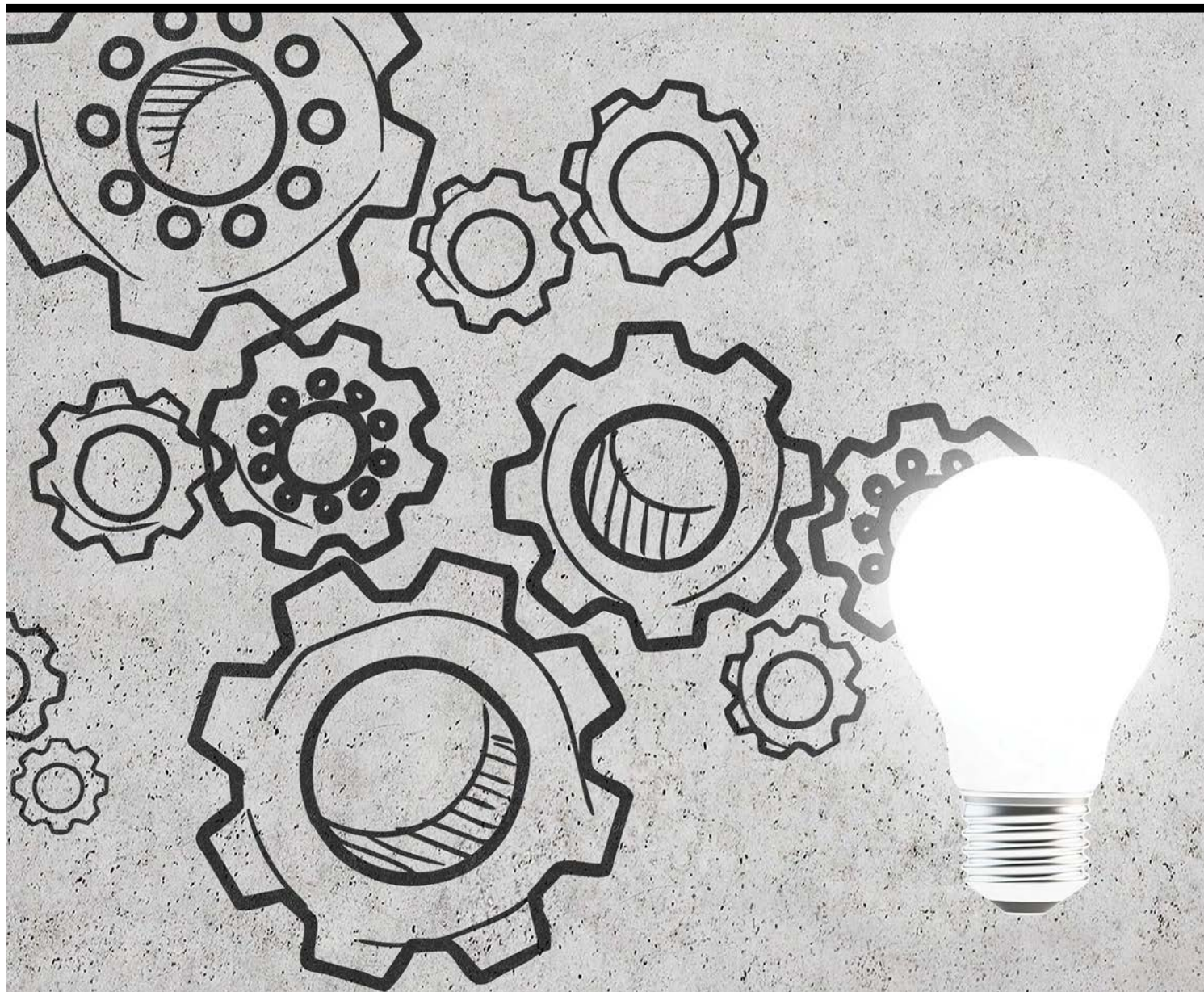


BoatingIndustry

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INTELLIGENCE YOU CAN PROFIT FROM



BEST IDEAS

31 profit building ideas from the dealer attendees of MDCE

SHARING BEST PRACTICES MAKES INDUSTRY STRONGER

One of my favorite parts about attending the Marine Dealer Conference and Expo every year is seeing how dealers work together to solve problems and share ideas for how to grow their businesses and the industry as a whole. Whether it is a pair of dealers sitting in a classroom after a session has ended or a group huddled in a corner going over notes at lunch, it is so rewarding to watch you learn from one another.

However, there is only so much time in the week. You can't network with everyone or attend every session.

Enter our Best Ideas white paper. We gathered 31 of the best dealer ideas from the past year that will help you operate your business, satisfy customers, manage employees, maximize your marketing opportunities and improve your service department. Four of these ideas were selected as finalists and participated in our Best Ideas panel at MDCE, one of which was chosen by attendees as the Best Idea of the Year.

This year, we have broken up the categories into six new classifications: Business Management, Customer Service, Employee Operations, Traditional Marketing, Digital Marketing and Service. All of these ideas can aid you in making your business smoother and more effective, which inevitably leads to sales growth.

If you need new inspiration for your business, start here. If you didn't have an opportunity to see the four finalists speak or attend MDCE, mark your calendars for Dec. 5-8 and take advantage of the opportunity to learn from your contemporaries and offer your own knowledge.

Together, through sharing best practices, we can make the industry stronger.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Brianna Liestman'.

Brianna Liestman
Boating Industry Managing Editor

BoatingIndustry

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WINNER

BUILDING ACCESSORIES SALES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

In the age of Amazon and other Internet retailers, selling accessories can be a tricky business for a marine dealership. "I can just get it cheaper online and it will be here tomorrow" is a common refrain.

Mary Jo Goettling, sales manager at Blue Springs Marine, was looking for a solution to her dealership's dropping accessories sales and a sales tool to excite her team. She came up with a promotion for new boat purchases to receive 40 percent off the cost of all accessories, up to \$1,000. She paid for the discount by building the \$400 difference into the cost of the boat.

Customers "get real excited when we get to the register, because they're ringing everything up at retail and we make it a point to say 'Wow, before your discount, we're at \$1,500,' and then we put in the discount," said Goettling, "and they are just completely wowed. The personal warm fuzzies they get with it, that's what's building the loyalty part of it, because they really feel like we're doing something for them."

This created excitement among the sales team by giving them a promotion to help close a deal. While the parts and accessories team was initially skeptical that the promotion would hurt their margins, Goettling said they came around when they realized they would be getting full margin and full retail for what is sold, as the reduction is built into the sale of the boat.

The promotion is available to customers from the time they make a down payment on the boat until the day of delivery. This allows the customer time to budget for the purchase and get the full value of the "discount."

"In our market, it's all disposable income," said Goettling. "These customers are planning around paychecks, they're not customers who can come in and just drop \$2,000 on accessories and not think about it. So we talk about planning a time they can come in."

This promotion is used all year long at the dealer-



Blue Springs Marine distributed this coupon to customers to promote the discount.





Blue Springs Marine President Jeff Siems and Mary Jo Goettling after winning the Best Idea of the Year.

ship but is bumped up to 50 percent during the boat show; \$500 is built into the price of boat show sales.

"I honestly didn't believe that the extra 10 percent would make that big of a swing difference, because 10 percent doesn't sound like a lot," said Goettling, "but if a customer is on the fence, the 50 percent sounds very enticing."

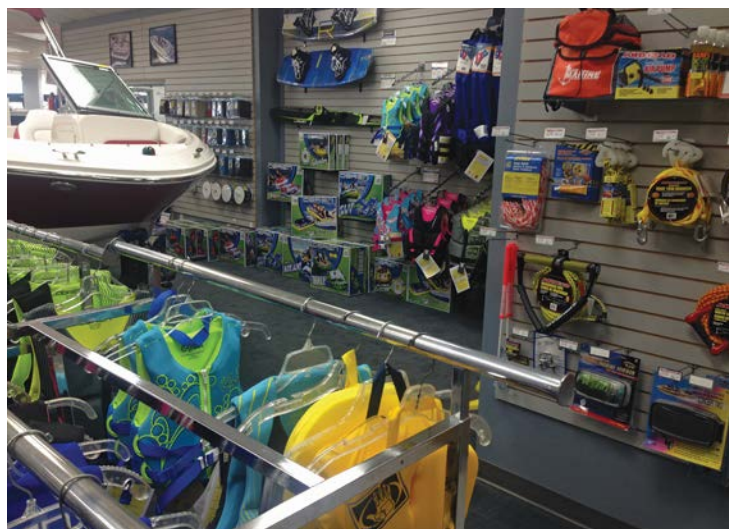
The promotion has been wildly successful at the dealership, with accessories sales increasing 28 percent. Of all the customers who received the promotion, only three did not take advantage of it, and one was a strange case of taking delivery four days after the sale. In fact, several customers at Blue Springs Marine ended up spending over the \$1,000 limit for the 40 percent "discount."

Goettling attributes that to the size of a promotion – it has to be 40 percent. Ten or 20, or even 30, just aren't enough to sway a customer.

"In people's mindset, it's got to be a high percentage to make it worth their while to be slightly inconvenienced," Goettling said. "I call it the Best Buy syndrome where they go, feel it, touch it someplace else and then they go home and order it."

And the promotion is about much more than closing the sale – it builds a loyalty with the customer that is long lasting, which is imperative for the mom-and-pop shop of today trying to compete with big box online retailers.

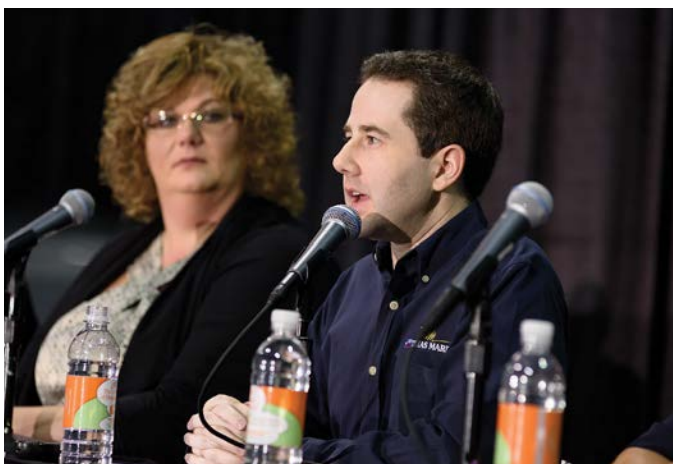
"It's not a matter of just trying to build the parts department or the accessories department sales. It's a bigger picture. We need to have these people's buy-in," said Goettling. "When they buy a boat from us, we should be their only go-to place. It should never enter their mind [to go elsewhere]."



The discount is a great selling tool for the sales and accessories departments.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

FINALIST



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER TEXAS MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

We have engaged an outside consultant from Owner Connect to assist in the development of our new "Business Development Center" (BDC) to help communicate better with our customers and to grow our business. A trainer makes on-site visits monthly to assure our sales and follow up processes are being followed properly and to help keep the sales team motivated.

BDCs have been a growing component of the auto industry. Most of the professionally run, modern auto dealerships have a BDC, which acts as a dedicated and fully staffed department to handle incoming calls, handle incoming leads, create business through making outgoing calls and send emails to centralize and coordinate communication between customers and employees, as well as between dealership departments.

Texas Marine spent more than a year researching and creating this BDC. With the assistance of an outside vendor who specializes in instituting effective and efficient BDCs, we are now able to operate a fully functional and industry-changing department. Multiple part-time and full-time representatives are hired specifically for the BDC staff at Texas Marine. A full-time BDC manager as well as a full-time BDC assistant also staffs our BDC.

The BDC receives all incoming new and used sales calls, which are channeled from our three locations to our BDC, which is located at our corporate office in Beaumont.

BDC reps focus on getting the callers into the dealership, rather than focusing on selling details like many sales people tend to do. Reps from the BDC also utilize the dealership's CRM to adhere to a set and constant follow up schedule to stay in periodic and constant phone contact with our entire database of callers, walk-ins and computer leads.

RESULTS:

The result is a large increase in the number of people walking into the dealership, where we know we have a greater chance of making a sale. One of the most revolutionary advantages of the BDC is the ability to generate business. As the BDC accumulates its ever-growing database of callers, walk-ins and leads, the reps are able to systematically reach out to customers and prospects. The goal is to see how we can help them by selling them a boat, provide assistance in helping them sell their boat, or to solicit them to bring their boat in for service or parts.

The BDC sustains a monthly outbound contact rate of over 4,500 phone calls and over 1,000 individual emails. The BDC has been responsible for a higher than average number of boat sales company wide per month during the season, as well as generating additional brokerage business and service department business. It is key that any dealership desiring to establish a business development center and have it succeed will require the operation to be custom tailored to its size, resources, processes and goals.



GREEN INITIATIVE BUCKEYE MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

Although Buckeye has always maintained its views on the importance of environment consciousness and doing what we can to reduce our environmental impact, we paid more particular attention to expanding these efforts. We engaged in the environmental audit that is done through our province's Clean Marine Program. This audit includes, but is not limited to, the following: measuring and documenting the amount of recyclables and waste discarded on an annual basis, promoting clean boating practices to boaters (including selling green products, providing what not to do literature, suggesting services to reduce the risk of contamination of the local water ways, gas saving tips etc.). It also involves recycling all of our shrinkwrap; we not only do this ourselves, we also act as

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

a depot for other marinas in the area. We also worked with the local stewardship programs and Kawartha Protect Our Waterways (KPOW) and Environmental Action.

RESULTS:

Not only is it good for the environment – which is why we do it – it is also good PR and important for our dealership's reputation as a leader in the industry and in the community.

WEEKLY METRICS/SCOREKEEPING

OCEAN MARINE GROUP

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

Ocean Marine Group (OMG) created a robust weekly reporting/scorekeeping package. This package provides OMG with detailed and timely information scripted in an easily digestible graphical format. The weekly reports are divided into two packages: Service & Parts Report and Sales Report.

Sales managers provide staff sales projections to the general manager by noon on Monday. Sales projections are a full disclosure of all deals under contract, along with working deals. The salesperson provides an expected close date, probability of closure, stock number and customer name. The GM reviews, makes final edits and then forwards the forecast to the chief financial officer. The CFO compiles the reports using the sales projections, along with data downloaded from Total Control Software. The sales report is forwarded to the managing partner by the end of day on Tuesday.

The service report is compiled and forwarded to the managing partner by the end of the day on Saturday. Both reports are summarized and "written-up" by the CFO. The CFO submits relevant questions to the senior management team addressing technician deficiencies, negative trends, questionable work orders, voided work orders, sub-par warranty billings, aged work orders, etc. On a weekly basis, the managing partner discusses points of interest with the GM and, where necessary, managers and staff.

Deals are discussed and tracked. Service techs are questioned regarding prior week efficiencies and trends. Weekly bonuses are calculated and included within the report, based on prior week's results, providing technicians with timely incentives. Sales managers field multiple questions based on the reports, such as peer-to-peer performance, month-to-month margin and sales trends, weekly performance, etc. Inventory turns are calculated and boat inventory reports are compiled presenting multiple perspectives on current inventory, providing management with the tools necessary to adjust pricing and formulate orders in a proactive manner.

RESULTS:

Unlike a snappy new marketing initiative, training technique or sales promotion, there is nothing sexy in weekly operational reports. Yet,

the impact the reports have had on our organization is nothing short of remarkable. The new reporting package immediately elevated accountability from the technician and salesman level up to senior management. Salesmen provide their entire book of business in detail on a weekly basis. This equips management with intimate knowledge of weekly sales activity.

Since the implementation in June 2015, sales margins at our Ocean Springs location have increased 20.1 percent versus 2014; consolidated boat sales revenue has increased 15.6 percent versus 2014; average parts profit has increased at our Gulf Port location by 25 percent versus 2014; and the average ticket revenue at our Gulf Port location has increased 35 percent versus 2014. Obviously, all outcomes cannot be directly correlated to the advent of weekly operational reports, however the positive impact from the staff to the management level of the OMG team is undeniable.



KEEP IT SIMPLE

OMAHA MARINE CENTER

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

Over the years, most of us have been involved with a 20 Group of some form or fashion. One of the key ingredients of a good 20 group is the benchmarks they provide us in order to assist us in managing a more profitable and efficient dealer operation. As we look at these benchmarks, we can very easily fall into a category I call "data overload." When we deal with our managers and review their individual departments, the benchmarks and key measures are different from one department to another. So we decided to come up with a measure that was consistent within all departments and easily understood by all.

What we did at Omaha Marine is to find a common denominator that applies to all departments in its most simple and basic form. That was sales, gross profit and wages, which everyone understands. We then compared the dollars spent in wages and calculated what

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

we get in return. We track how many dollars in sales we are producing per dollar of wages. In addition, we calculate the number of dollars in gross profit per dollar spent in wages by department.

What we are looking at are the trend lines. Are there areas of improvement or decline that as a group we can provide a substantive answer as to what caused the results, both good and bad?

This may seem very basic and crude on the surface. However, it is a measure that not only every manager can grasp, but also every employee. We put together a report, which we review as a group and then the department managers review with their employees. The two key things we are accomplishing with this is a “buy-in” on the part of every employee while at the same time creating a competitive environment in a fun way for our department heads.

If you look at the dollars alone, it is not fair. Sales dollars per wage dollars in the sales department, as an example, would be considerably higher than in parts. The true comparison is the percentage of improvement each month, quarter and year over the prior period. This percentage increase is what the managers pride themselves on.

RESULTS:

When you lay it out for all to see along with rough numbers for fixed overhead, employee benefits and employer taxes, the employees and managers understand more about what it takes to run a dealership and what their responsibility is to produce a return in order to support their wages.

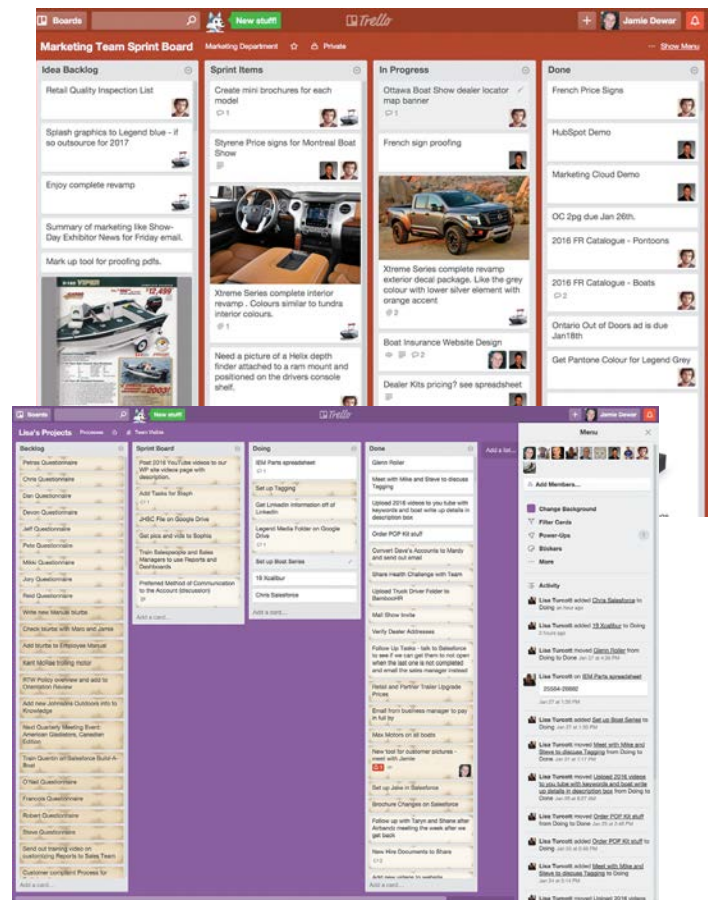
We have increased our gross profit per wages by 17.5 percent over last year and increased the gross profit dollar generated for every dollar spent in wages by 41.2 percent over 2011. We believe this is a much more easily understood measure in order to get the buy in of all managers and their employees. This measure is in addition to the normal key measures and benchmarks discussed at the department head level. Simply put, this was a real eye opener for the employees and the results speak for themselves. Not only are our managers engaged in the success of the store, but most employees are also.

SCRUM BOARDS

LEGEND BOATS

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

We have been looking into a new project management system, in which big tasks are broken down into smaller, more doable tasks in order for them to be completed all the way through and tracked accordingly. With most businesses and with most major projects, the task is one complete item on the “to-do” list and more often than not, will be completed about 80 percent of the way and then left. By using the Scrum Boards, a major task such as “Revamp the new boat orientation process” is broken down into smaller tasks that can be completed on a weekly basis, such as “Assemble a demo orientation package,” “Interview the orientation specialist to script their part,” etc.

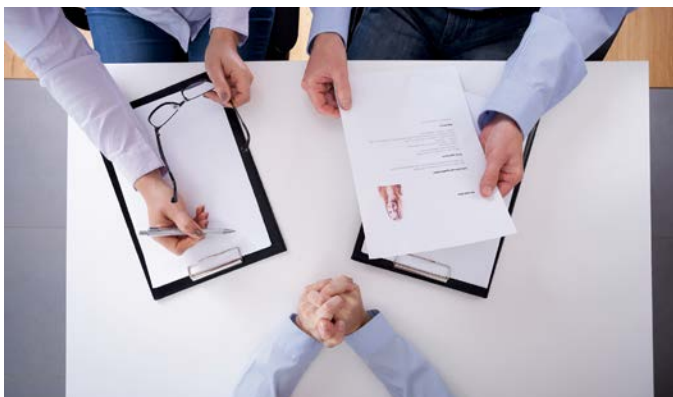


Teams then meet once per day to see what can be moved from the “To-Do” column to the “Doing” column and what can be moved from the “Doing” column to the “Done” column. It is recommended that these Scrum Boards be on the wall in a central office, either with sticky notes on the wall, cards on a cork board, or if everyone on the team is using technology, then have an electronic board. This allows for managers or team members in any department to look at someone’s Scrum Board and see what they are working on at all times. Perhaps a manager needs a team member to complete a project, they will write it on a sticky note and bring it to that person’s Scrum Board. They will look at their “To-Do” and “Doing” columns and be able to evaluate if the task they are requesting takes priority over what is currently being done, or if it can wait, in which case they will stick it in the priority order on the “To-Do” list.

RESULTS:

This system keeps everyone informed of what is going on all over the business at all times, provides accountability to all people involved and ensures that tasks are completed efficiently all the way through instead of being left undone at near completion.

EMPLOYEE OPERATIONS



BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEWING

OAK HILL MARINA

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

In 2014, we implemented one of the most critical changes that has given our dealership the edge over our competitors. Behavioral-based interviewing has improved our hiring success. Spader Business Management has taught the leaders in our company how to ask situational-based questions to our potential candidates that highlight how they have handled circumstances in the past.

RESULTS:

This has proven to be an indicator as to how they will handle favorable or unfavorable situations in the future. It also has helped us recognize and focus on traits and capabilities, plus the likelihood of successful development within our dealership and our culture.

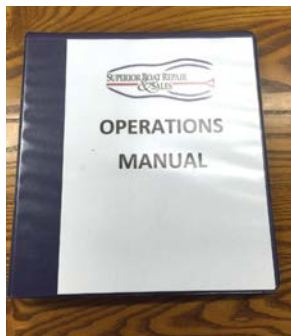
OPERATIONS MANUAL

SUPERIOR BOAT REPAIR & SALES

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

Every aspect of operating our dealership that can be documented is being added to our Operations Manual. The intent of the Operations Manual is:

- For it to be a reference guide for all employees;
- To be used for training purposes;
- To be consistent with all of our procedures; and
- If something ever happened to the two owners, the next of kin would have a guide on operating the business.



The admin assistant was first given a list of the most common operating procedures. For example, opening and closing procedures, how to register new and used boats, or where new, used and service boats are parked on the property. After this, each department and their processes were analyzed. These started to be documented. The Operations Manual is a “work in process” manual. Everything that can be documented is being added.

RESULTS:

The results are we are more consistent in our operations, we are more efficient, and new employees are easier to train. If something ever happens to the ownership that does not allow them to operate their small business, the replacement leadership will have a guide to continue the business.

PORTFOLIO MANAGER

THE SAIL & SKI CENTER

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

The evolution of our marketplace over the past three years has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of product lines and models in our new boat portfolio. Plus, there has been a significant increase in pre-owned purchase, trade and consignment opportunities. The administrative workload of managing the additional new boat lines and the evaluation and marketing of pre-owned products, tasks normally performed by senior management, had become a very time consuming job thus creating competing priorities between the sales and management functions of the company. As a result, we created and filled a Unit Inventory Portfolio Manager position in June 2014. We were able to hire an individual, Rich Ritzema, who was a past member of our sales staff and who also had superior computer and organization skills.



RESULTS:

The results have been outstanding and have made the transition into the 2015 model year the smoothest we have had in past memory. Additionally, the time period from the acquisition of pre-owned inventory to the completion of refurbishment and online marketing has been substantially reduced resulting in faster turns and improved profitability.

EMPLOYEE OPERATIONS



MULTILINGUAL STAFF

MIAMI NAUTIQUE INTERNATIONAL

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

With the ever-emerging global marketplace, bilingual staff members are a must. On any given day, 10-12 different nationalities may enter our dealership. Therefore, our customer service depends upon both spoken and written communication in many languages. In the past year, we increased the number of languages spoken and the nationalities represented at Miami Nautique from 10 to 13. Ninety-four percent of our staff is bi/trilingual and our nationality representation increased by 24 percent.

RESULTS:

Hiring additional staff members who speak multiple languages allowed for us to increase customer service for our international clientele.

SPECIAL EVENTS SALESPERSON

BREATH'S BOATS AND MOTORS

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

Considering the relative small size of our full-time sales staff, and in order to take advantage of many of our local community's fairs, festivals and events that take place during prime boat-selling season,

we hired a part-time special events salesperson to represent our dealership and boat lines in local events we would ordinarily be unable to participate. This salesperson has gone through manufacturer's sales training modules and is knowledgeable in our sales procedures and customer service processes.



This salesperson is able to man a booth or small display at a variety of events, pass out brochures and dealership information, and lead customers back to our dealership for further consideration of a particular purchase.

RESULTS:

Hiring a part-time special events salesperson who is well trained in our dealership's philosophy, processes and procedures enables us to have a presence and/or display in these events. His ability to engage existing and potential customers in a variety of community events has led to additional brand awareness and dealership name recognition in our region.

CUSTOMER SERVICE



BRINGING THE BOATS TO THEM

BUCKEYE MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

We know that our customers' free time is the most valuable thing in the world to them more so than any of their possessions. We sell extremely high-end products to wealthy clients. We have shifted more to working with clients online or over the phone and arranging to do demos at their cottages with the boat of their choice.

RESULTS:

By bringing the sales experience to them vs. trying to get customers to come to us has been extremely successful with a high closing rate. We have also found that not only does it get us a captive audience with our customers where they feel that they are in control, we are also able to get our boats in front of people who would otherwise never come to the dealership like neighbors or friends. The feedback has been incredible and we have moved more and more toward this model using our marketing staff as a tool to show people boats at their cottages.

NEW DELIVERY PACKETS

VALLELY SPORT & MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

We designed very professional packets for our customer to receive at the paperwork closing. We felt that it was important that the customer feel good, proud and walk out of the F&I office with a professional packet after they purchase our products. We had custom folders created with lifestyle imagery, supporting dealership data and our company information on them. In the packets, the customer is walked through several inserts after they complete the paperwork for their new boat. The inserts are a Facebook page invitation, a dealership "who's who" document, a coupon for 10 percent off their



first accessory purchase in our parts and accessory department and a flier on our online review process for them to share their experience. These inserts are all on the left side of the folder. On the right side our business manager puts his/her business card and all of the documents that the customer signed.

RESULTS:

Customers now walk out of the office with a glossy, professional piece and were walked through everything in a consistent manner. This has received very positive customer feedback.

BOATYARD PARTNERSHIP

MARINE CONNECTION

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

At Marine Connection, we wanted to give our owners an easy, simple-to-use resource for finding and booking qualified service providers for all of their boating needs. We found our solution this year when we partnered with Boatyard, the world's first app to deliver boater happiness on-demand.



At our Miami and West Palm Beach locations, we encourage customers to download the Boatyard app before they leave our dealership, letting them know they can now order any service they need for their boat with a couple of clicks from their mobile device. We provide our customers with a special promo code to use when they schedule their first service online or via the app, granting them their first boat wash free of charge, and making way for a smooth transition into their new (and improved) boating lifestyle.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

RESULTS:

Our alliance with Nathan Heber, founder and CEO of Boatyard, has allowed us to maintain our relationships with owners post-closing by offering an endorsed solution for providing ongoing boat services from trusted and vetted marine professionals. Because we are able to leverage Boatyard's entire menu of services, we are able to provide more value to our customers by providing them with solutions including those outside of the scope of our dealerships' existing services.

The feedback we have received from customers has been nothing short of incredible; the ease of scheduling appointments with our service department and all the other 24/7, on-demand services of the Boatyard app have allowed them to enjoy more time on the water doing what they love. We are confident this partnership will not only be mutually beneficial to Boatyard and Marine Connection, but also result in greater customer satisfaction and retention.

relationships. We are pleased to announce that we have consistently positive CSI/NPS scores of 90+.

ACCOUNTABILITY SHEETS

BUCKEYE MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

In an effort to provide the absolute best process for pre-delivery inspection (PDI), we have created an accountability sheet that tracks who has performed what services on each new and used boat that we deliver to our customers.

The accountability sheet is part of a package that travels with the boat through each department along with the necessary PDI documents, e.g.: warranty sheets, PDI forms, CSI sheets. This system serves several purposes; it ensures that all the appropriate for warranty tracking, and making sure that every member of the team understands what has been done and what is left to be done. The document is inclusive of all departments that each boat sees, with pointed checklists for each department.

The document is inclusive of all departments that each boat sees, so it begins with comments and a checklist for the technician. It then has a 70-point checklist for the on-water tester who has the ability to send the boat back for necessary adjustments, as well as multiple sign offs for boats that need to be tested more than once. The sheet also has a dedicated section for the fiberglass department where we can make and flag different fiberglass work for the boat. It includes both comments as well as a diagram so that specific gel repairs can be marked and are easily found by the fiberglass department following the fiberglass section is a detailing section that has a 20-point checklist that allows detailers to ensure that the boat is completely cleaned sales staff who sold the boat. Their section includes a 20-point inspection to ensure that all the options are in the boat, all the appropriate work has been done and the boat exceeds customers' expectations.

RESULTS:

This accountability sheet allowed us to streamline communications, flag specific anomalies found on the boat and hold each team member accountable for their duties in preparing our customers' boats. These sheets when completed find themselves in the customer's file so if we have any service issues with the boat post delivery such as overdriving, poor performance, missing keys, etc. we have all the data stored within the customer's file. This document was a huge undertaking to develop and implement however it has created a common flow of information on sold boats as they travel through departments, and has been well received by each department, as everyone remains on the same line of communication and the documents are all stored together in a waterproof bag keeping all the necessary documents accessible all the time to every department.



BOAT BIRTH CERTIFICATE

CLEVELAND BOAT CENTER

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

As of July 2014, we initiated a new marketing strategy geared toward customer satisfaction. Our marketing team, led by Mike Alleva of Lighthouse Media Solutions, created a boat "birth" certificate that is given to customers who buy new boats from us. The certificate states "Welcome to the Family," representing the new relationship that we have forged with the customer. The certificate also explains included perks of buying the boat: a free half day on-water lesson, 10 percent off any parts, accessory and service purchase made from CBC for as long as the customer owns the boat, as well as priority scheduling and invitations to special events hosted/sponsored by CBC. The certificate has two one-time use coupons attached to it for 20 percent off any purchase, and \$10 off any purchase.

RESULTS:

We make every effort to show our customers that we value them as individuals and take interest in their lives as well as their boating needs, and we make every effort to continue forging long-term

TRADITIONAL MARKETING



FISHING SEMINARS

MARK'S MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

Mark's Marine sponsors and actively works to support a number of fishing clubs and events in our region. We harnessed this goodwill and the connections to the fishing community to ask local fishing guides to volunteer to speak at our seminars.

Each week we bring in a different speaker who will speak either on a specific fish species or a specific body of water. The speakers and topics change every year to keep the seminars fresh and relevant.

We approached our accessories suppliers for support and were able to secure a wide variety of door prizes given out at the end of each seminar. The dollar value of the door prizes themselves isn't great, but it helps to add some energy to the end of each night and encourages people to fill out the feedback forms, allowing us to collect email addresses and get feedback about topics and the quality of each seminar speaker.

Advertising costs are very minimal. We post the seminar schedule to our website and at the boat show. We also are able to capitalize on strong local papers to get free advertising and weekly support from the papers on broadcasting the schedule.

Local fishing clubs also help to get the seminar out to the local fishing community and they have become an eagerly anticipated feature in our local market.

RESULTS:

When we first started the seminars we planned to hold them in our conference room, which can hold roughly 20 people. It outgrew that space almost immediately and we were routinely hitting 30-50 people the first year. By the second year we were hitting 100 people regularly. Currently we are at the maximum our parking and build-

ing will support with max attendance pushing 200 and an average attendance around 130-150 people per seminar.

The end result of the seminars from a financial standpoint is a very full rig schedule between February and May with a number of very large fishing boat rigs as people get excited to get their boats rigged like the speakers they hear. We've had customers every year literally call the service department the next day and schedule off-season rigs to get their boat ready worth tens of thousands of dollars. We've also seen 6-10 boats a year extra sold directly as a result of our Spring Seminars based on our internal feedback forms.

This has helped us to maintain clear and consistent growth in the rigging department and helped to cement our reputation as the place to get your boat rigged in our market area. It has also helped to solidify our reputation in the fishing community, which helps us to compete against lower-priced volume dealers without having to sacrifice margin.



NAUTIQUE BARREL BOSS DAY

THE SAIL & SKI CENTER

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

The Nautique Barrel Boss Day is an event specifically designed to get current inboard ski boat owners and prospects out for an opportunity to wakesurf behind new Nautique models that continue to gain the reputation as the best wake boarding and wakesurfing boats on the market. The event is held at a local high visibility lakeside restaurant and bar popular with the watersport enthusiast crowd.

We are constantly trying to reinvent our events to maximize participation and sales results. One of the hot segments of our business is wakesurfing and specifically our Nautiques equipped with the Nautique Surf System. We needed to get people out to try the system,

TRADITIONAL MARKETING

but were concerned about attracting unqualified participants that just wanted a free ride behind the new boats. We thus disguise our surf demo event by creating a Surf Day. The idea is to run an event where our customers sign up for a specific time slot to wakesurf behind a new boat for \$40. Then we give our sales staff the leeway to offer the time slots to their prospects at no charge.

We promoted the event using the formula we have been refining to market all of our recent events and promotions. We combined using a traditional direct mail piece with social and digital marketing. We have found that an oversized postcard still has value because in Texas we can purchase a list of currently registered boat owners. We send the postcard to all owners of wakeboard boats in our market area. We create an array of digital art that we used to promote the event by email, Facebook, our website and Google Adwords.

RESULTS:

The Nautique Barrel Boss Day is always a huge success. We have three boats at the event that are scheduled for three time slots each. We fill all three boats for all three time slots. Typically 60 percent of the participants pay to attend and our sales team invites 40 percent. Most interesting is that close to 80 percent of the participants are actively interested and engaged in the idea of buying one of our new boats with the surf technology. We generally sell three to four boats directly from the event. Harder to measure, but equally important, is the residual value of the awareness of Nautique's products we create during the promotion of the event.



RADIO MARKETING

BMC BOATS

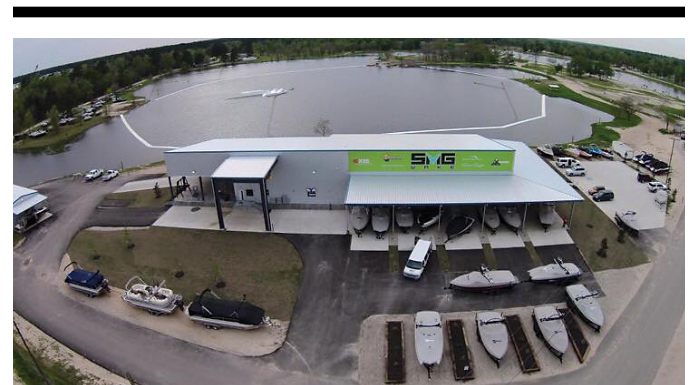
HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

This year we partnered up with one of the local radio stations and put together a campaign whereby BMC Boats would provide a boat to the radio station to auction off in return for a promotional package for the Saltwater Classic. In the free package, we get display space, advertising, two tents and full setup. We also provide the in-water

pilot boat and get a boat displayed in front of the weigh-in booth, all included. In return we provide a boat for auction, the kicker being we have set a reserve price equal to the cost of the boat. So if the boat sells, we will get 100 percent of our cost back. And we used a leftover model, which is a unit we would normally sell for a short margin anyway.

RESULTS:

This is a win/win deal for both parties. The promoter (radio station) keeps any money paid for the boat above cost. Worst case, they don't lose any money either and they get a better promotional tool to advertise and a pilot boat. We ended up with great exposure and leads off the event, as well as handed out a number of flyers and service specials.



REGAL SMG EDITION

SINGLETON MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

We analyzed our product mix and came up with a systematic approach to order the right boats, with the right features and options, at the right price points to induce buyers to naturally progress up through the various lines. In previous years, we struggled to differentiate the Regal sport boats from Cobalts because we often ordered them with similar engines, features, and options, resulting in prices that were too similar; so we had to reduce the Regal prices, thus lowering gross margins in order to sell them. This year, we worked directly with Regal to create the SMG Edition, which outfitted the boats with just the most popular features that allowed us to create enough differentiation with the higher-end Cobalt product, while still maintaining an attractive retail price point at full gross margin.

RESULTS:

The result was a smoother sell-through of both Regal and Cobalt products with better gross margins across the board.

TRADITIONAL MARKETING

FINALIST



BOOST YOUR BOAT SHOW RESULTS

LAKE UNION SEA RAY

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

We created a custom website specifically made to highlight our featured boats displayed at the January Seattle Boat Show. The website, lakeunionevents.com, included highlights of the 12 new models that were on display in our booth. Each boat included photos, description and a video.



We used this website not only to feature new models but also for a lead enhancement by allowing customers to register for VIP appointments/viewing of the boats at the show.

Customers were sent an email with a link to our boat show website inviting them to schedule an appointment. We also sent a direct mail piece to specific prospects and customers inviting them to preview our featured boats online and schedule a VIP viewing of their favorite boat.

For the first time, we incorporated a boat demo opportunity for qualified customers during the January Seattle Boat Show. If a customer was very interested in a boat but was hesitating on a deposit, we offered the customer and his family an opportunity to test drive/demo the boat during the show.

This is an opportunity that no other dealer at the boat show offered. Because our display included 70 boats all indoors with 100 percent of our sales staff working the show, offering day-of demos took a major undergoing of organization and effort. We created a detailed Boat Show Demo Policy for all staff members so everyone would understand the process and the purpose of the demos.

RESULTS:

The results of the website were great. We had 35 online scheduled VIP appointments and from these appointments, we sold three boats. Now that the website has been built,



it will be easy for us to switch out copy, photos and video and update the site with a fresh new look for the 2016 show.

The boat show demo opportunity was a success. Twelve customers took advantage of the boat show demo opportunity and all but one purchased the boat during the show. Although we might have sold these customers the boat eventually, our goal is to sell boats during the boat show. We found that allowing the customer to wait until after the show to demo the boat, we lose a percentage of sales. Allowing a time lapse for the customer to demo provides opportunity for the customer to lose interest or worse, decide to do business with a competitor.

DIGITAL MARKETING

APPLE TV PARKS MARINA

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

Apple TVs can be used seamlessly to implement slideshows that can be controlled from one central location. Great for multiple location dealers and marinas that offer many and diverse amenities. This is a great way to advertise programs, specials, cross advertise businesses, etc. Slides can be easily loaded to a photo stream through an iPad and shared through a photo stream to desired location.

You need to purchase an iPad, which cost about \$500 or less. You could also use your own iPhone or any Apple device. You also need



a television in your dealership, a wireless Internet connection and Apple TV, which costs around \$99. Create a photo album on your Apple device and share it with each desired Apple TV. Slides can be created as well, very simply created and saved as .jpegs.

RESULTS:

We have very captive audiences at our restaurant and inside our retail areas of our dealerships. We advertise boats, entertainment, websites, retail items, social media outlets, watersports lessons and more. It's easy, effective and pretty low cost because most everything you need you already have, with the exception of the purchase of the \$99 Apple TV.

INBOUND MARKETING BOSUN'S MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

We upgraded our inbound marketing strategies in 2014 by investing

in a dedicated freelance boating/cruising/fishing writer to help us with custom content generation and provide a free flow of original Bosun's Marine content for our digital marketing engine.

We measure this action or "conversion" by the number of leads, emails, phone calls, opt-ins, etc. to our dealership. With the help of our marketing partnership with Lighthouse Media Solutions, we budgeted in 2014 for a "writer" to be part of our marketing, communications and PR team. Dan Mather who also writes for New England Boating was our go-to point for generating custom content for Bosun's Marine in 2014 and still does this today.

He was tasked with generating content in several key areas:

- Custom content for each of our "brand pages" on our website;
- Feature articles for our Bosun's Whistle Newsletter;
- Posts for our Bosun's Marine blog; and
- Posts for our social media platforms.

RESULTS:

Instead of pitching hard our products or services, we are delivering information that makes our buyer more intelligent. The essence of this content strategy is the belief that if we, as a business, deliver consistent, ongoing valuable information to buyers, they ultimately reward us with their business and loyalty.

BUILDING EXCITEMENT IN THE WINTER MONTHS CANDLEWOOD EAST MARINA

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

Over the winter, we have started doing video walk-thru deliveries on our boats in our showroom. The videos are designed to be a reference for customers when they go out on their new boat and need a reminder on how to do some items. Prior to the customer taking delivery of their new boat, we would send the customer the link for them to review on what to expect on the actual day of delivery.

We cover items such as:

- A general walk thru of the complete exterior of the boat;
- A general walk thru of the interior of the boat;
- Demonstrate gauges, switches and controls; and
- Demonstrate optional equipment such as filler cushions, bimini tops, flagpoles, stereos, etc.

One of the selling points at our marina is our beautiful showroom and indoor service bays, which allow for a comfortable selling environment all year round as well as the ability to service boats in any weather. Additionally, our gorgeous waterfront facility, private restaurant and marina are second to none on the lake, as such it's an important factor in a customer's decision on where to buy and dock their boats.

DIGITAL MARKETING

Being a New England-based marina, we're always looking for ways to:

- Drive traffic to our showroom in the fall and winter months;
- Increase service requests in the winter months; and
- Leverage our waterfront club as means of driving sales during the colder months when the trees are bare and the snowy conditions make our facility look less than inviting



With this in mind, we hired Studio 360 Pro, an affiliate of Google, to photograph our entire facility during the summer so customers can engage in a full virtual tour at the height of its beauty. Additionally, customers can explore various boats on our showroom floor and walk our club grounds and docks.

Customers have access to this tour when our marina shows up on a Google search or when a customer visits our website. Additionally, we use it as a sales tool to show customers our lakefront facility regardless of the weather outside.

RESULTS:

For the first season we began with our most popular models to see how the public would like them. After the success of them this season, we plan on continuing the videos throughout the winter months and even going through a bit more in-depth in them as well covering maintenance and safety items. One of our videos has seen over 2,000 views already and we've had people come into our showroom referencing the videos as well.

We've had great feedback from customers who went on the virtual tour. Additionally, our sales staff is beyond excited to leverage this tool in the winter months to show perspective customers all that Candlewood East Marina has to offer. Our team believes that boating is all about getting into the mindset of the boating lifestyle and this virtual tour will help them get one step closer to living the dream of being a boater at our marina!

facebook

TARGETED FACEBOOK POSTS

SEA RAY OF CINCINNATI AND LOUISVILLE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

We use Facebook Boost Posts in order to send specific messages to targeted boating audiences in an extremely affordable manner. Once we determine the message, we can decide which members of the boating community will be targeted. For example, we recently took in several trades and broker boats in a matter of a couple of days. In order to bring more viewers to our website inventory page to view these boats, we created a Facebook Boost Post touting the newest fleet. We added a link to our used inventory website page within the ad. We chose an audience of people who enjoyed boating, fishing, cruising, skiing and wakeboarding. We also chose people who lived within the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky areas who were male and female ages 32-64. We put a budget of \$20 toward it knowing that our reach was potentially 3,000 or more local Facebook users.

RESULTS:

As soon as Facebook approved the ad, we saw results. Over 4,800 viewers received the link. Some of them shared it with their friends, resulting in almost 6,000 viewers reached. A total of 281 paid viewers clicked the link to the website (per Facebook results page); however, our Google Analytics results show that 455 people came to the website during the campaign period and went straight to the inventory page. Overall, the \$20 campaign was successful, resulting in multiple sales of the pre-owned boats listed.

This is such an easy and inexpensive type of campaign to set up and monitor. Every time we run Facebook Boost Posts, we see results whether it's sales, responses to event invitations or even job applicants.

DIGITAL MARKETING

FINALIST

PANDORA

SINGLETON MARINE GROUP

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

After profiling our customers in early 2014, we discovered that our customers were twice as likely to listen to Pandora Internet Radio as the average consumer. To test Pandora's effectiveness, we designed a 30-day campaign that combined three weeks of brand building before transitioning into an event-driven strategy promoting an on-site sales event.

As 80 percent of Pandora's traffic is mobile, we primarily targeted its mobile platform. In order to best serve that audience, we built a mobile-first microsite at MeltMyStressAway.com to capture referral traffic from our Melt My Stress Away trial radio and banner campaign on Pandora.

Immediately following the 21-day Melt My Stress Away campaign, we transitioned into the Ultimate Hooky Day Event promotion, which was designed to activate the awareness we had generated over the previous 21-days and convert those listeners into buyers.

The Melt My Stress Away Pandora campaign ran for 21 days and directed listeners to a mobile-first microsite hosted at MeltMyStressAway.com. The ad featured a young girl promoting boating and Singleton Marine as the place to buy a boat.

The Ultimate Hooky Day Event was an on-water event designed to activate the Pandora listeners, get them on the water and a reason to purchase a board or wakeboard and wakesurf gear.

We built a mobile-first microsite hosted at UltimateHookyDay.com that included an embedded promotional video and was designed to capture promotional traffic and share details about the day. The event was promoted on Pandora and Facebook. We also sent out 10,000 postcards targeting existing customers and registered boat owners within 50 miles of our store.

After the success of these promotions, we created a privately branded radio station called OneWater Marine Radio.

We worked with our Pandora sales and operations representatives to design and program the perfect station for boaters. From designing the name, custom Pandora station URL, Pandora promotion, music programming, audio and banner ad styling, audience targeting, and on-going music refinement, the OneWater Marine Radio station continued to evolve and improve as the campaign went on.



PANDORA

A branded radio station at Pandora works a little differently than a regular Pandora station. Typically, you can like or dislike songs and Pandora will determine what songs to play or not play on your station based on your preferences. However, on a station that's shared across thousands of users, like OneWater Marine Radio, individual preferences cannot be incorporated. That means it's up to us, the station owner, to program the station based on statistics. So weekly, we would review the number of Spins (times a song was played), number of Skips (times someone skipped a song) and calculated which songs were being skipped most frequently. We would adjust our playlists based upon those preferences.

Also, once a Pandora user adds our station to their playlist, it stays in their playlist until they physically delete it. So our station will continue to live on in their playlist well past our campaign duration.

Inside our station, only our ads will appear. We used these ads to promote our dealer locations and linked all ads to our Dealer Locator.

RESULTS:

- Total Impressions: 4,972,409
 - Unique Listeners: 1,890,835
 - Click-Thrus: 24,087 (1.27 percent; Pandora national average is 1.03 percent)
 - Total Leads: 131
 - Event Attendance: 37 percent said they heard about the event on Pandora
 - Total Event Sales: \$2,840,000
 - Campaign Cost as a Percentage of Sales: 0.8 percent
- The station has been incredibly successful and popular. The feedback we've heard has been great and statistics bear that out.
- Total Impressions: 3.413 million
 - Station Adds: 23,425 (people added our station to their playlists!)
 - Listening Hours: 18,000
 - Average Listening Minutes/Listener: 47 minutes
 - In-Station Ad Impressions: 115,078 (ads served inside our station)
 - In-Station Ad Clicks: 3,762
 - In-Station Click-Thru Rate Percentage: 3.27 percent

SERVICE

PREFERRED CUSTOMER GROUP

ATLANTIC MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

In an effort to retain our best group of customers, as well as generate off season work and income, we filled a need for these customers. Our dealership's location is coastal North Carolina and we have an eight- to nine-month boating season here on the coast. This left our customers boats either in their boat lifts or in their slips three to four months each year without any use. Living on what's often called Hurricane Alley, this also creates a need for these customers for storm hauling and securing in case of a storm. Most insurance companies demand a hurricane plan these days for any coverage of a boat used on the coast.

We created a group of 80 customers we now call our Preferred Customer Group (PCG Group). We limit this group to the 80 boats less than 30 feet in length to ensure our resources and current manpower are always available to us and could handle this demand.



First we found and rented open bulk warehouse space, short term. We offered this service with an e-mail blast to a select customer list and it sold out within a day. Now they renew each year with an online form with credit card payment. We clearly defined our obligation in case of a storm to the group and our staff. We had all the equipment and tools in place with an existing large service department. Now we have purchased an offsite 35,000 square foot building for this program.

RESULTS:

We now have a clear plan in case of a storm. Our PCG Group is the first called in case of a hurricane warning. We informed the PCG

Group of what services would be offered by the dealership. These services will vary with size and timing of a storm along with the additional charges of these services at that time. We make these calls to our customers and see how to best assist them with securing their boats. After all the PCG is covered and secured we then offer haul outs to all our local customer base. This makes us a good neighbor to all our customers and friends as time and space would permit.

The group also provided the following benefits for the dealership:

- Additional storage incoming exceeding \$100,000.00 yearly.
- All these boats are serviced and or winterized before entering storage, and a inspection of the boat is done for these customer as the boat enter our building – this is additional service department income.
- Addition services are offered at that time, off-season work offered.
- Boats are removed in the spring; most are detailed prior to their request date to be returned to their slips. All are tested, fueled and returned to owners. This to is additional service department income for us.

LOT PORTER BONUS PROGRAM

BMC BOATS

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

In 2014, we set up a program whereby, for every detail we sell in service, we would give every lot porter a small cash bonus each week. The whole company got behind selling details, as it was a good cause and helped the pay levels of our hardworking porters. This year we added a component to this, by cash spiffing, about \$10, for every fiberglass or vinyl flaw found that resulted in a warranty claim of at least \$100 to the company. By doing this, we had all the boat washers and porters looking for both vinyl and fiberglass work daily on our lot.

RESULTS:

It resulted in a 400 percent increase in our details sold, while this year it continued to increase detail sales. This was one of those win-win programs that proved very good to everyone's pay and morale, as well as provided a good way to find more warranty, which has always been a huge challenge.

SERVICE

EMERGENCY SERVICE PROGRAM

WAKESIDE MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

This year we implemented a 24-hour emergency service program. We started the development by asking our team, and specifically our techs, how they would design it to work for them. They asked for clarity and cash. We delivered that first. The service is priced as a luxury option that starts at \$295 to send a tech. That \$295 goes straight to the tech.

We then contracted with Answer Connect as an answering service to handle the calls 24-7. We designed that program so that the answering service would take the call, log the issue, explain the charges and give the customer the option on how to proceed. An email transcript of each call is forwarded to the service team, my bookkeeper and myself.

If the customer wants to pay, they are directed to our website to make an immediate online payment to initiate the dispatch of the tech. We knew we wanted to lock that down prior to us dispatching. Once the payment is made, a tech reaches out to the customer to coordinate a service call.

**RESULTS:**

We have given the option back to the customer on what they want us to do and that is the critical component of service. We have placed a premium value on 24-hour service and given them an option. When we have done a service call, they are thrilled. And when they choose not to, they tend to be happier on Monday when we work them into the normal rotation because we have provided an immediate option to address their issue rather than allowing them to build on the frustration all weekend. And the most important result may be that I sleep better knowing that our customers' needs are being attended to. I'm never apprehensive to take the first phone call Monday morning.

TRACKING EFFICIENCY

MARINE CONNECTION

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

Using the service module in our DMS marine software system, technicians login to the terminal located in the service bay and retrieve their work orders, thus registering a start-time for a specific

job. When the technician returns to the terminal after the first job is completed, an end time is logged into the system and their next work order is then retrieved. The technician logs the start-time of the new work order in the system terminal and repeats the process until the end of his shift. Our shop foreman is responsible for tracking and enforcing this process. The tracking reports includes time accountability for the following areas on each job:

- Retail Service
- Warranty Service
- Internal Job – Unbilled time on job
- Internal Cust. – Customer Goodwill
- Internal Shop – Company maintenance, repair, etc.
- Gelcoat Repair
- Upholstery Repair

RESULTS:

This system allows us to make significant differences in the production of billed hours by allowing us to track the individual technician, and the service department as a whole, along with warranty and goodwill. With this data we can immediately identify deficiencies, and resolve them with additional training, improved resources or reassignment of employees.

“JUST IN TIME” DELIVERY

TRAVERSE BAY MARINE

HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED:

Our parts stocking level is being decreased by 25 percent due to our new computer system tracking and sale history report. Because of the computer tracking mechanism, we can carry a fewer number of a popular parts, and reorder as needed. Also parts with slow turnover can easily be identified and not reordered.

We have discovered with “just in time delivery” we can get parts in one to two days. We track this using our Beyond 2000 parts module, which gives us the applicable report when needed. We also incorporated our F&I person to assist the parts department during peak times by being the receiving clerk and doing data entry functions such as unpacking of incoming parts and the input of the incoming parts orders put into our computer system. This person also assists by calling the customers who had a special order notifying them that their part is in.

RESULTS:

The result is fewer incoming calls to the parts department of already sold items, giving greater time for the parts people to sell new orders.