

2014 TOP 100 SUCCESS SECRETS





BEST PRACTICES OF THE BEST



The Top 100 represents the elite of the boating industry, the best boat dealers in North America.

They are dealers who excel at every aspect of their business from sales to marketing to customer service to overall business acumen. But the Top 100 program is not just about recognizing those dealers for their excellence, but also sharing the secrets of their success with the entire industry.

On the following pages, you will find examples of some of the best practices of the Top 100 and the Top 100 Hall of Fame companies.

There's still time to be part of the 2014 Top 100. You can apply by going to BoatingIndustry.com/top-100/ application. To nominate a dealer, or if you have any questions, contact me at jsweet@boatingindustry.com or (763) 383-4419.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jonathan Sweet'.

Jonathan Sweet
Boating Industry Editor-in-Chief

Boating Industry magazine and the **Leadership Alliance**



SERVICE DEPARTMENT

TECHNICIAN COMPENSATION PLANS

PRINCE WILLIAM MARINE SALES, WOODBRIDGE, VA.

At Prince William, a Top 100 Hall of Fame company, every technician earns a small base salary and then is paid on a monthly commission plan where efficiency is key to their success. The commission rate is tiered based on experience and certifications earned, and any comebacks are completed on their time before or after normal business hours and they do not get compensated for that time.

Technician efficiency is monitored on a monthly basis. The company's service manager continually monitors technicians for their efficiencies and assess weaknesses and strengths for training needs. Technician monitoring includes field observation, tracking comebacks and reviewing monthly efficiency reports. Individual technician hours are compiled on the efficiency spreadsheets showing differences between each type of work order (i.e. Rig, Warranty, Retail and Internal). These totals are turned in on the 15th of each month, reviewed by management and crossed checked with the computerized DockMaster reports.

Management compiles the information and calculates technician's efficiency, which is reviewed with the technician at the end of the 30-day period.

When efficiencies are lower than expected an analysis and consultation is done with the technician to determine what caused low efficiency. Issues of equipment and types of work orders assigned are considerations, and an improvement plan is put in place when necessary.

Efficiency reports help with future scheduling when a technician is having difficulty with certain type of work. With the monthly reviews, technicians are motivated to improve their performance and efficiency.

"MAIL ORDER" SCHEDULING AND DISPATCHING SYSTEM

SHORT'S MARINE, MILLSBORO, DEL.

Over many years the service staff at Short's has developed a simple but effective scheduling and dispatching system. Short's uses what it calls a "mail order" style sorting system that allows the service manager and shop foreman to organize and track all work orders in the system.

The work orders are reviewed on a daily basis and placed in the appropriate "slot" where it is new, waiting for parts, assigned to a specific tech, or, among other classifications, waiting to be billed. As a new work order is written it is bar coded and placed in the "new work order" slot.

Each bar coded work order is scanned every day. The scanning updates the status on the computer system so anyone with access to the service programs can determine the location of a work order, as well as what has and has not been completed. This allows for fast retrieval of the orders as well as a faster response to customers when they inquire about the status of their requested work.



RIGHT THE FIRST TIME

COLORADO BOAT CENTER, JOHNSTOWN, COLO.

"A job done quickly is important, but a job done 'Right the First Time' is essential," says Colorado Boat Center vice president Nancy Smith.

Colorado Boat Center has a bonus plan that incentivizes every employee to pay attention to quality work. The company puts \$50 a week into each technician's account. If a boat comes back for rework, each technician is docked \$40. The strategy behind docking all technicians is to re-enforce the importance of checking your own work, and when in doubt, asking for help from another technician, as well as each technician taking team responsibility for all work done in that department.

The service manager also receives a quarterly bonus for increased profits and maintaining a minimum CSI average. In 2012, the service department completed 2,424 repair orders with only 14 reworks.

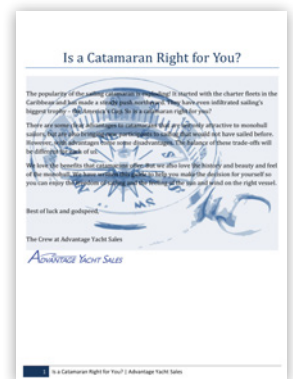
MARKETING

CONTENT MARKETING

ADVANTAGE YACHT SALES, NEWBURYPORT, MASS.

Recognizing the value of positioning the company as a boating expert, in 2011 Advantage Yacht Sales started writing extended articles and white papers of interest to its customers and prospects. Topics have included "5 Tips for Buying a Used Boat and Getting a Good Deal," and "Preparing Your Boat for Sale." Advantage shares these documents over social media, in email campaigns, and at boat shows.

When the company entered the catamaran market in 2012, it released "Is a Catamaran Right for You?" a 9-page guide that discusses the differences between cruising monohulls and catamarans.



MARKETING

“We expect this document will help educate our large list of monohull leads on the benefits of catamarans,” says president Douglass Giuliana. “Many of our prospects are curious about cats but don’t know much about them. This document will help to educate them on cats while also positioning us as cat experts.”



BOAT SHOW STRATEGY MARINE CENTER OF INDIANA, INDIANAPOLIS

The No. 1 boat show goal for Marine Center of Indiana is to always have a fresh display and change it as much as possible to “look better than all the rest,” says customer relations manager Fred Book.

“This past year we knew that the pontoon market would be good so we focused our efforts on showcasing our Berkshire Pontoon line,” he says. “We built and assembled a boat dock that would give customers access to over 15 different models of our pontoon line.”

Not only did this make it easy for customers to view all of Marine Center’s boats, but it eliminated people from climbing several sets of stairs. By having several models available this worked in the dealership’s favor to point out the differences amongst the various models.

The company also heavily promotes the fact that it has been a Top 100 Dealer nine years in a row.

“Being the only Top 100 Dealer in the show, promoting with large signage that we are certified, adds a great deal of credibility and helps us stand out,” Book says.

“TALK TO A TECH” BOOTH WOODARD MARINE, HYDEVILLE, VT.

One of the new ideas that Woodard implemented at its boat show was the “Talk to the Tech” booth. During boat shows, Woodard made a mini classroom inside of its main show booth with a seating area,

TV screen, a real engine half on display (an engine cut in half so you can see the inside workings of the engine and also the moving parts), maintenance parts that were damaged and new parts to compare, and its service staff.

The company then hosted mini service seminars during the show. The seminars were given by the Woodard service team, and gave very basic maintenance tips and demonstrations. The technicians hosted seminars on topics such as ethanol fuels and propeller selections.

The dealership also had its service writer on hand to make appointments during the boat show. Customers that booked a service appointment during the show received a small discount off that service with Woodard Marine.

SALES

THE GREAT BOAT EXCHANGE BUCKEYE MARINE, BOBCAYGEON, ONTARIO

With used boats selling well in its market and Buckeye Marine struggling to keep them in stock, the Ontario dealer created The Great Boat Exchange in 2009. The successful annual campaign encourages customers with boats to trade them for a newer model by offering incentives and promotions.

It includes a direct mailing, email and phone campaign to existing customers during storage season, using slogans such as “We want your used boat” on handouts at the service desk and in print as well as more targeted campaigns like “Looking to sell your (insert customer’s boat here) and move into a new (insert brand here)? ... Check out our great deals when you trade in.”

All potential trades were examined by the sales team upon arrival and from there the sales person would call each customer and discuss different options with them. If the salesperson noticed winter work that could be done when assessing the customers trade they tried to upsell this. If they noticed a lot of service work required they used that as a tool to upgrade the customer into a new boat.

Overall this program proved to be very successful and ensured Buckeye good trades as the customers who it targeted had bought a boat from Buckeye in the past. The other great advantage to this program was because it was done during storage time the company had their boats on site to check them before making the initial contact and could determine an accurate trade value for each boat.



SALES



LEAD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
QUALITY BOATS OF CLEARWATER, CLEARWATER, FLA.

The company has carefully developed a detailed lead fulfillment sales process that is followed by all of its sales representatives. In addition to sales opportunities that walk into the showroom location, the process accounts for leads that come in via phone or Internet as well.

The objective for Internet and phone leads is to get the prospect into the store. Up to that point and after, sales personnel are required to document the time and content of each communication in the lead management system so, in the unlikely case that someone or something goes awry, management has the tools and ability to follow up with the customer and not miss a beat.

The lead management content is hosted and backed up by an outside server so it can be accessed remotely to instantly gain access to all of the leads from anywhere in the world and at any time.

“We believe our location and presentation is one of our best selling points and do not want to bypass this important step of selling ourselves first to the prospect,” says CEO Daniel Bair.

Each lead that is generated online by the website, by email via online advertising sources, or from boat suppliers is received by the marketing manager and carbon copied to one of the company’s owners. Leads for new boats are rotated among sales representatives by product line/specialty, while leads for used boats are given to the sales representative who took the boat in trade, or who has the listing for a consigned boat.

All of the sales personnel and the marketing manager have smart-phones that are linked to business emails so they are able to receive and respond to each lead as they are forwarded from the server to the marketing manager and then on to the proper salesperson. The company strictly enforces the policy that was set several years ago that requires the sales person to respond to each lead within one hour of receipt during normal business hours. Overnight leads receive an automatic response informing them that they will hear from a representative the next day.

If a salesperson does not respond to a lead by this criterion, he is taken out of the rotation for leads generated on-line for two weeks.

“The result is that our average time for response to email leads is a matter of minutes, not hours,” Bair says.

CREATIVE TRADE-INS

RUSSO MARINE, MEDFORD, MASS.

When it comes to pre-owned boats, Russo Marine has a simple philosophy: “We will trade it, no matter what it is.”

“We have the courage to be innovative and creative in order to drive incremental sales,” says president and CEO Larry Russo Sr. “Oftentimes, a potential buyer has something of value that he/she needs to sell before they can move forward with the purchase of a boat.”

Russo has accepted several non-traditional items in trade in order to sell a boat. Here are just a few:

- 1967 Amphicar Amphibious Vehicle
- 2001 Winnebago Motorhome
- Harley-Davidson Motorcycle
- Certified Precious Gem Stone
- 2003 Anniversary Edition Corvette
- 1955 Fully Restored Classic Chevrolet
- 2008 Z06 Corvette
- Gold Coins

“We dominate the pre-owned business in our market because we are innovative and proactive,” Russo says. “We have the financial resources to own them, the space to store them, the service department to recondition them, the marketing skills to promote them and the sales skills to get them sold.”

Russo also takes trade-ins on brokerage boats, something no other dealer in their market does.

IMPROVING SHIP’S STORE

LEGENDARY MARINE, DESTIN, FLA.

Faced with an underperforming Ship’s Store and significant competition from nearby locations of Bass Pro Shops and West Marine, Legendary Marine decided to take a leaner and meaner approach to inventory, and only offers the more basic and spontaneous purchased items such as



suntan lotion, caps, basic T-shirts and other sundries. Previously, Legendary had been offering an eclectic mix of higher-end products ranging from boat shoes and sundresses, to jewelry and artwork, which resulted in slow turns and frequent write-downs.

Now, Legendary only offers the basics including a variety of oil products for Yamaha, Mercury and Volvo along with custom-branded signature T-shirts (Skeeter, Chris Craft, Everglades, Sea Hunt and Cobalt) and sundries. The T-shirts are designed



by a leading producer of marine shirts featuring custom designs. These are popular among boat owners, but are also top sellers among Legendary employees who purchase them for minimal cost. As a result of the custom T-shirt program, Legendary Marine enjoys the benefit of its brand and its boat manufacturer brands being “walking advertisements” throughout the market.

As a service to customers, Legendary also added a new Optiwash station for sunglasses and rings. As a result of these changes, the Ship’s Store is no longer underperforming. The result of this major inventory realignment is a 21 percent increase in sales.

MANAGEMENT

APPRENTICE PROGRAM HURST MARINA, MANOTICK, ONTARIO

Hurst Marina focuses on growing employees by hiring young, energetic people and training them through various schools and in house. The apprenticeship model of mentoring is intrinsic to each department.

The past decade has seen many Hurst workers who began their careers as co-op students, summer gas dock workers, volunteers or cleaners advance successfully to positions of responsibility as marine technicians, pro shop supervisor and service administrators. Hurst encourages employees to take industry training courses, covering all expenses so employees can earn their living while improving their abilities.

“The strength of the model cannot be overstated,” says president Peter Hurst. “Turnover and new employee training is expensive and yet is not a significant expense to Hurst Marina. Our workers are long-term employees with extensive training and strong company loyalty.”

TRACKING INVENTORY TURNS LODDER’S MARINE, FAIRFIELD, OHIO

Lodder’s Marine tracks its sales, orders and turns on a monthly basis to make sure the dealership is not going off track.

The tracking system goes back to 2002 and allows Lodder’s to tell by model what it has sold of any manufacturer the company carries.

“This is important because when you look at all those years on the same sheet, you begin to see trends in what models are hot and what models have fallen out of favor,” says general manager Matt Lodder.

The spreadsheet starts with the beginning inventory each month, shows sales each month and what was ordered in each month. This sheet gives Lodder’s its average monthly inventory, which is used to compute its average turn for each manufacturer.

“Most manufacturers agree a dealer needs at least a 2 turn and once you get them to agree to that and show them your market share is right, it’s just a matter of running the numbers through



the spreadsheet that will produce a 2 turn,” Lodder says. “Just as equally important as setting up a good plan at the beginning of the model year is monitoring the plan to make sure you didn’t order for a 10 percent increase and you’re seeing a 10 percent decrease. Because of the traditional system of buying boats in the offseason, you have to react quickly to the data otherwise orders exceed sales and inventory builds.”

To monitor that Lodder’s uses a Spader report that helps them anticipate sales and computes how much inventory should be on hand by boat category, with a goal of a six-month supply.

EMPLOYEE TRAINING PROGRAM WAKESIDE MARINE, ELKHART, IND.

Besides sending all of its full-time staff to external training opportunities such as the Marine Dealer Conference & Expo, Wakeside Marine also takes advantage of having an experienced tech to lead in-house training for the service department.

Every year, the company sets aside a week in February and a week in March for the “Tom Stark Tech School.” Stark was a trainer for Johnson/Evinrude in the 1980s and now enjoys sharing his knowledge with the younger techs.

He builds a syllabus each year, sets up the shop and simulates problems that the techs work through. Further, during the season, he spends a couple of hours each week punched into a “training” operation code on an internal work order so that he can help diagnose and repair while working side by side with a tech.

“He is a stickler for the tech showing improvement because he can’t stand to waste his own time and energy on somebody that isn’t showing a strong desire to grow,” says WakeSide president Jeff Haradine.

The company averages a \$100/week in paid time dedicated to the training, plus the two weeks in the off season.

CUSTOMER SERVICE



NO-COST TRAINING

BOSUN'S MARINE, MASHPEE, MASS.

Bosun's Marine provides on-the-water training, sometimes through several sessions, at no cost to its customers.

"If we or the boat owner feel that additional training is needed, we'll hire an outside captain for longer-term training," says president Tim Leedham. "We want our customers to feel comfortable with their boats and to feel safe on the water. Our responsibility doesn't end with the closing of the sale; that's where it begins."

At Bosun's Marine, the education begins during the sales process. If a potential customer wants a sea-trial before completing a sale, one of Bosun's five U.S. Coast Guard-certified captains will take him for a run – with or without a salesman onboard.

After closing the sale, the delivery process starts in earnest. First, the Bosun's team interviews the new boat owner to determine his or her experience level, as well as how much formal on-the-water training and rules-of-the-road schooling they may have received. It's a Bosun's Marine policy to strongly advise new customers to complete a basic seamanship course through a local chapter of the Coast Guard Auxiliary or the U.S. Power Squadron.

With every new or used boat that Bosun's sells, the dealer also requires the customer to take an on-the-water orientation with the rigger/technician who worked on the boat. Customers who decline must do so in writing on the delivery inspection sheet and on a copy of the sales agreement, something that only happens once or twice a year.

"WE CARE" PROGRAM

DRI-PORT MARINE, O'FALLON, MO.

Dri-Port has a comprehensive program designed to make the customer experience different from what they are used to with other marine dealers and truly enjoyable from the beginning of the customer's relationship with the company, no matter what department that is.

Simply called the "We Care" program, it is designed so that the Dri-Port team can start with the basics of identifying key areas that matter to the customer and learning how they can improve them.

"With this approach, as other ideas are developed to improve customer satisfaction, they can fall under the umbrella of our We Care program and significantly add value to the program," says Vice President Laura Edelen. "Largely the results of a program like this will be increased customer satisfaction and gradual growth in all departments but will be something to gauge year-over."



SHIPSHAPE DETAILING CENTER

SHIPYARD MARINE, GREEN BAY, WISC.

In an effort to improve profitability and increase revenue during the winter months, Shipyard has opened its Shipshape Detailing Center. In the past, this location was primarily used for winter storage, but in 2012, it also became a professional detailing center.

With state-of-the-art equipment in a large heated storage facility, Shipyard professionally clean cars, RVs and boats. The company also offers a Shine 'N Fly package for those who'd like their automobile professionally cleaned and stored indoors while they travel out of nearby Austin Straubel International Airport. A staff member of Shipshape Detailing will even pickup the client's vehicle out of the airport parking lot and either return it the ramp upon their return or meet them curbside to help them with their bags.



Congratulations

TO THE TOP 100 DEALERS FROM *BOATING INDUSTRY*
AND THE 2013 LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE.



imagination at work



- Action Water Sports
- Advantage Yacht Sales
- Alberta Marine
- American Marine
- Austin Boats & Motors, Inc.
- BMC Boats
- Boat Town, Inc.
- Boaters Exchange
- Boats Incorporated
- Bosun's Marine, Inc.
- Breath's Boats & Motors
- Buckeye Marine
- Cannons Marina
- Causeway Marine Sales, LLC
- Clark Marine
- Cleveland Boat Center
- Colorado Boat Center
- Davey Marine
- Deep Creek Marina
- Desmasdons Boatworks
- Dockside Marine
- Don's Marine, LLC
- Dri-port Marine
- Dry Dock Marine Center
- Farm Island Repair and Marine
- Fogarty's Lake Flower Marina
- Futrell Marine
- Gage Marine
- George's Marine & Sports
- Glencove Marina
- Gone Fishin' Marine, Inc.
- Gordon Bay Marine
- Gordy's Lakefront Marine, Inc.
- Hall Marine Group
- Hampton Watercraft and Marine
- Hayes Marine

- Hurst Marina Ltd.
- Irwin Marine
- Kelly's Port
- Lake Union Sea Ray
- Lake Viking Marine, Inc.
- Laurel Marina Dealership
- Legend Boats
- Legendary Marine
- Lodder's Marine
- Lynnhaven Marine
- M&P Mercury Sales Ltd.
- Maple City Marine LTD.
- Marina Fortin
- Marine Center of Indiana
- Marine Connection
- Marine Sales of Pickwick
- 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.
 - Vally 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