

# BEST IDEAS

*Profit-building ideas from the dealer attendees of MDCE*

# Boating Industry

## How to make an editor's day



At *Boating Industry*, we love to hear from dealers who pick up an idea from one of our publications or events and successfully translate it to their own business. In fact, if you want to brighten the day of one of our editors, sharing that type of story is a great way to do it.

That's because providing actionable content is our goal in everything we do, whether it's through the magazine, the website, the Marine Dealer Conference & Expo or the Top 100 Dealers Program. It's also one reason we love hosting the Best Ideas program. Each year, it invariably leads to stories that start with an idea presented through the program and end with a dealer making more money.

One of the reasons this program is so powerful is that these ideas come to dealers through their peers, other dealers, and they've already been vetted in the real world. Often, an idea can be adopted "as is," other times it requires some tweaks. Sometimes those tweaks are a learning opportunity for the person who submitted the idea, which is exactly the type of dealer-helping-dealer cycle that makes the industry stronger.

When he presented his winning idea at last year's MDCE, Eric Splatt of Woodard Marine certainly opened the eyes of a lot of dealers to the possibilities of QR codes. His dealership took something many had heard of but never tried and utilized it in a way that benefitted his customers and set the dealership apart.

You can read the full details of his idea in this e-white paper, which we can offer to the entire dealer community, thanks to the support of our sponsor, Dominion Marine Media. We hope this collection of ideas will serve as a resource for you, providing strategies you can use in your business. And if you do, I invite you to let us know ... and make our day.

Mike Davin  
*Boating Industry* Senior Editor

**IAN ATKINS**  
VICE PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER

**DOMINION**  
MARINE MEDIA



Thank you for your interest in and support of the contents of this year's Best Ideas white paper. We're excited to be involved in another successful "brainshare" of marine leaders.

The renewed energy in the marine industry can be gleaned at boat shows, local dealer events, fishing tournaments – wherever there is water. I hope you have experienced the same buzz that I've witnessed recently. Some say it is spring fever or the fact that the economy really is on the path to recovery, but I believe that dealers like you who have developed creative methods of conducting new business are responsible for keeping the spirit of the boating lifestyle alive. Your resilience and aptitude for success flourished in a seemingly daunting market – and the results spoke for themselves. Dominion Marine Media is pleased to partner with *Boating Industry* to bring you this white paper and offer helpful and creative ideas, as well as best practices from some of the recognized leaders in our industry.

Dominion Marine Media has been dedicated to the success of the marine industry for over 20 years, and we remain committed to providing insight, guidance and statistics to help assist you in your business. Your growth is critical to the industry, and we are confident that the information provided in this white paper will help you capture the growth you need.

If you are interested in more information regarding these best practices or other information, please contact us at 877-354-4069.

Best Regards,

Ian Atkins

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## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Nancy Smith Colorado Boat Center Fall Facility Checklists

#### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

One element of the dealer certification and re-certification process is completing periodic facility checklists to keep a dealership's eyes open to how specific areas of the facilities are viewed by customers, employees and management and improvements that can be made. Colorado Boat Center took the process one step further by creating an additional facility checklist.

During a staff meeting, each person was given a check sheet and asked to walk the grounds and through each department and note needed improvements (excluding the obvious and costly major needs). The lists were then compiled into one check sheet, with a blank column for "Action Taken," and each person received a copy for their workstation. During the slower fall and winter months, the check sheets were then used to accomplish necessary tasks and maintain productivity.

#### Results:

At the beginning of the New Year, everyone brought their check sheets to the staff meeting and shared the Action Taken column. There were only three things on the list that had not yet been completed due to weather constraints and the facility was well organized and fixed up before the spring season arrived. It was a very effective tool to promote independence and accomplishment for the good of the company, without requiring constant reminders.

FACILITY CHECK SHEET - 9/3/2010		
GENERAL EXTERIOR	COMMENTS	ACTION TAKEN
Exterior of bldgs are free of damage, discolor & stains	Could use spray wash, paint needs touch up, better color-something that turns heads	Spray wash done
Fascia is maintained and well-lit	More lighting in back, junk behind Bldgs, trash cans need paint, fence poles bent, bamboo lights need to go	Exterior light added Bamboo lights removed Fence poles replaced Cleaned & replaced flags
Landscaping is well-maintained	Dead weeds & trash along fence, weathered flags, scrap wood needs to be picked up	Cleaned & replaced flags
Exterior windows are clean and free from damage	S. Bldg broken window, Top 100 stickers bubbled	Removed old stickers & replaced window
Exterior signs provide clear directions to dept/parking	Clearly define parts, service & sales bldgs, sign on done lot	New signs on north & south bldgs Sign & chain added to done lot
Signage reflects current dealership information	Remove Hurricane, add Moomba & Supra	Removed Hurricane & added M & S
Boat display, customer parking & service areas maintained	Clean rocks from entrances & display boat asphalt, paint new parking lines, add gravel in some areas, 24/7 forms get wet	Done 24/7 forms put in ziploc bag
GENERAL INTERIOR	COMMENTS	ACTION TAKEN
Interior windows are clean and free of damage		
Walls & ceilings are clean and free of damage, discolor/stains	Sales ceiling is peeling, service wall cover falling down	Showroom ceiling - fall project Service wall cover replaced
Walkways and aisles are clean and uncluttered	Area between sales & office is cluttered, trash, etc	Walkthrough cleaned up
All customer areas are clearly identified		
Signage/promotional displays are current & maintained		
All furniture is clean and free of damage		
Floor surfaces are clean & free of damage, discolor & stains		
CUSTOMER PARKING	COMMENTS	ACTION TAKEN
Customer parking area is well-lit		
Adequate number of parking spaces for customers	Good parking for single cars, keep open for customers	
DISPLAY LOT	COMMENTS	ACTION TAKEN
Display areas are well-lit	As well as can be expected	
All recruited boats are clean	Not when mud season hits, nothing too dirty	
All signage is current, well-lit and free of damage	Replace Hurricane sign with Moomba & Supra, Elevated boat posts are rusted - Also boat hoist posts	Done Repainted
SALES SHOWROOM	COMMENTS	ACTION TAKEN
Showroom is neat and clean		
There is sufficient room to allow for effective presentations	Ceiling stuff falling off, clean popcorn machine	Popcorn machine cleaned Ceiling repair - fall project
There is current product & promotional literature displayed	Supra sign holder missing signage	Removed
All work spaces are clean, uncluttered & well-organized	Cleaning rags in Crestliner, Tom's office unorganized	Picked up and cleaned
(If all office is clean, uncluttered and well-organized)	Cluttered window sills & floor	Cleaned

### Joseph Hoffmaster Hoffmaster's Marina

#### Semi-Weekly All-Hands-On-Deck Meetings

#### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

Prior to November 2010, I ran all the marketing at our dealership in conjunction with my wife, Sally. In November of 2010 we decided to hold an all-hands-on-deck meeting for the purpose of creating a marketing calendar for the coming year. That meeting changed course when the technicians expressed their frustration with the

administration of the service department. We implemented changes and decided to meet again. At first we decided we would hold meetings once a month. The next month I asked what had changed and the techs said not much. That's when I decided we would hold meetings twice a week (on Monday and Friday).

The greatest hindrance to this was finding a private place to meet uninterrupted. The employees created a climate-controlled conference room out of a loft in the service bay area where we could hide. We actually place a "Closed: Come Back at 11" sign out there. The meetings have created an atmosphere of accountability, a place where everyone can be heard and a fountain of creativity.



## Results:

The meetings have resulted in the creation of the Coconut Joe Mascot, creation of two service promotions, and creation of seasonal promotions, creation of the Hofftoberfest Party, resulting in service being up 5 percent, parts 5 percent and new boat sales up 20 percent.

**Christina Prober**  
Seattle Boat Co.  
Managing Online Reputation

## When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

I joined a Web conference hosted by *Boating Industry* last December and learned about managing your online reputation. The webinar really hit home – we needed to pay closer attention! We still have much work to do on this front, but we immediately began owning and expanding online place pages for all our locations where customers can leave reviews. (Which frankly can be a lengthy process if Google, for example, has misinformation about you like they did SBC). We know that Google specifically looks for and features reviews that exist on multiple sites, and we understand that the star system can be quite diluted by the one negative review that cannot ever be eliminated. We also took to heart the

message that you do not want to manipulate the online review system – you will get into trouble.

## So what to do?

This summer, we implemented an “Ask for Online Review” program, which will be managed via email. We want to have a say in what happens – to influence our fate rather than stand back and watch. We understand that the passion one feels that drives the negative review after a poor experience can be far more powerful than the feeling that drives a person to tell everyone they are happy with you! But people do write us personal letters of thanks, and we hope we can convince them to tell everyone. We actually don’t have very many online reviews, but we want to change that and we want to encourage our happiest customers to help us do so!

## Results:

At this stage, the results are TBD. If this program alone doesn’t affect our online reputation, we may take a more aggressive approach, including going back through our history of testimonials and contacting our “fans,” being careful not to create a manipulative reputation in doing so.

**Nancy Smith**  
Colorado Boat Center  
Personal Attire

## When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

Personal attire was a big issue for us for several years. We never knew what to expect from one day to the next, even though we had clearly defined the boundaries of a dress code in our employee handbook. We had been researching different options and costs, but the final straw that prompted us to take action was a 40-plus “Barbie” who thought she was the cat’s meow in her low-cut tops, miniskirts, high heels and excessive jewelry.

Not only was the attire totally inappropriate for our business, but the high heels were a worker’s comp claim waiting to happen on our gravel lot. Granted, she was an extreme case, but the ultimate goal was to create a professional look for our company and minimize confrontations over clothing.



We chose Land’s End Business for our company attire (not including the technicians) because of the quality products, wide variety of styles and colors, and reasonable prices. The turnaround time is quick and they have a satisfaction guarantee that they stand behind.

In order to cover all of the legal aspects of what would be considered uniforms, we give each employee an annual \$50 clothing allowance and the company pays for all of the logo, shipping and tax costs. The staff can purchase as much as they want over the \$50 allowance at their own expense, and we still cover the additional costs for those items. To allow the staff to get the most bang for the buck and reduce company costs, they are encouraged to place their clothing orders during periods when Land’s End is promoting product discounts, free logos and/or free shipping. Polo shirts often go on sale for \$12.50-15, which can get them 3-4 new shirts a year without any personal out-of-pocket expense. If they prefer a higher-end style or quality product, that’s their choice.

## Results:

Our staff is happy being able to pick out styles and colors that suit them, and it makes them feel comfortable and confident during their workday. The company is happy to have a professionally attired staff that can be easily recognized by customers because of the logo. It took all of the confrontation out of an important but secondary issue, and at minimal expense to the company. Last year’s clothing expenditure for seven employees was \$504.

**Andrea Chase**  
**Sea Ray of Cincinnati**  
**Going Green!**

**When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

In late 2010 we started a companywide recycling and environmental awareness program in an effort to help reduce our company's ecological footprint. Our dealership has become very efficient in not only reducing the amount of waste produced but finding eco-friendly resources for disposing of the recyclable products that we do use. At the same time, we are helping local community schools and nonprofits with our actions. We are also offering eco-friendly alternatives to our customers in hopes of helping the boating community become more ecologically aware as well.

■ **Paper** - We set up recycle boxes at different stations within the company. We ask employees to dispose of their junk mail, magazines, newspapers, old brochures and paper. Each week the boxes are taken to a local high school and placed in their recycling club's bins. The school is very appreciative as they receive educational incentives for every pound of material they receive.

■ **Cardboard** - We installed a cardboard recycle dumpster and hired a local service to haul it to the recycler on a weekly basis

■ **Printer Cartridges** - We have also made an effort to collect all empty toner and printer cartridges. When an employee comes to the supply room to get a new cartridge, the recycle box is conveniently available right there for disposal of the old one. Our cartridges have been going to the local chapter of the national nonprofit, Shoulder to Shoulder. This organization operates free dental and medical clinics in Honduras. They are able to purchase office supplies with the credits they receive from our recycled cartridges.

■ **Computers and Monitors** - We send our old personal computer towers and monitors to the local nonprofit, Cincinnati Computer Cooperative. The organization refurbishes them and offers them to low-income families and students.

■ **Bulk Antifreeze** - We purchase antifreeze in 55-gallon drums. Each year we are left with many empty, large plastic barrels that once held antifreeze. One of our employees heard that people use these for different household functions such as composting and collecting rainwater for gardening. We decided to list the barrels for free on Craigslist to people who would use them for

**Going Green!**



these reasons. They were gone as soon as we listed them!

■ **Bulk Oil** - We purchase our oil in 55-gallon drums. Therefore, we can eliminate using plastic gallon and quart containers, which would otherwise be thrown away.

■ **Shrink wrap** - New boats are delivered to us in shrink wrap - very thick plastic. Once cut from the boat, our service department takes the plastic to the local recycler.

■ **Aluminum Cans** - Our aluminum soda cans are taken to the local recycler.

■ **Batteries and Light Bulbs** - Old marine batteries and fluorescent light bulbs are sent to the recycle station. We often have to pay to recycle these items due to the mercury content but feel that it is well worth it.

■ **Used Motor Oil** - All used marine motor oil is stored and sent to the oil recycler.

■ **Oil and Fuel Filters** - We have a dedicated 55-gallon drum for our used oil filters. They are picked up and recycled.

■ **Brochures** - We put digital versions of our manufacturer's brochures on our website. This

allows us to refer customers to a paperless version rather than mailing them a heavy paper version. As a result, we are able to order fewer brochures from the manufacturers.

■ **Cleaning Products** - We are also glad to advertise that many of our products in our accessory department and service department are ecologically friendly. We now offer biodegradable antifreeze, toilet paper, toilet bowl cleaners and deodorizers, environmentally friendly cleaners and polishes, as well as non-chlorinated brake cleaner.

The results of this effort have been exciting to monitor. Not only are there measurable results such as thousands of pounds and gallons of recyclable materials collected by the dealership, but the program has also promoted an employee team-building experience. Employees are proud to be a part of this program, working for a dealership that is promoting environmental responsibility. Many talk about how this program has motivated them to recycle at home, too.



## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

### **Nancy Smith** **Colorado Boat Center** **Winterization Gift Cards**

#### **When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

Colorado Boat Center has been using Winterization Gift Cards for several years to get customers back into the store before the next annual service. When a repair order is cashiered, the



customer receives a gift card worth \$10 that can be used on any FUTURE visit during the next year. It gives them one more reason to shop with us instead of stopping somewhere else to pick up some motor products or parts they need. Most of the cards are used toward a parts invoice and the average invoice is \$75, which means that they are usually picking up a few extras while they are there.

Since the recession, consumers have reverted back to being price-conscious and have established more conservative spending practices. Coupon usage increased dramatically and websites like Groupon are booming. At the same time, there was a noticeable uptick in usage of the \$10 gift cards. As a cost-saving measure, we use business card stock paper to print the gift cards on, instead of using our plastic gift cards.

#### **Results:**

To date, 24 percent of the cards from last year's winterizations have been redeemed, which is an increase of 12 percent from previous years.

### **Adrian Spiker** **Deep Creek Marina** **Concierge Services**

#### **Best Idea:**

Our concierge services include the pickup and delivery of boats to current and new customers. We also provide these services on water or on land, and our concierge services also include service, maintenance and towing to and from our site to a customer's home or dock.

#### **When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

Our concierge service began in 2004 when Deep Creek Marina opened. We implemented these services in order to provide our customers with the most satisfactory experience possible. In the future this service and others like it will continue to be used and developed to improve not only the quality of our customer experience but the quality of our business as a whole.

#### **Results:**

This service has resulted in an expanding network of long-term and returning customers, as well as a consistent number of new and potential customers. These customers provide our company with the opportunity to remain the most popular source for boat sales and recre-

ation in our area. Likewise, we intend to continue to provide excellent and consistent service to our customers.

### **Jeff Wilcox** **George's Marine & Sports** **On Hold Trivia**

#### **When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

Our on hold messages, which we updated in May 2011, give local trivia to entertain customers instead of either music or pushing just our current specials.



[Downloadable .wav sample](#)

#### **Results:**

Customers are kept entertained and more attuned to what our message says, not to mention that they lose track of time a little more, thus relieving additional stress.



**Patty Reeve**  
**Strong's Marine**  
**Deliveries** →

**Best Idea:**

Strong's provides everyone who purchases a new boat from us with on-water time (up to 20 hours) with a Coast Guard certified "Delivery Captain" as we don't just "sell" the boat, we want to make sure clients know how to use their boats the way they want to.

**When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**


About five or so years ago, we decided to take our delivery process to the next level by offering our clients 5-20 hours of on-water instruction (depending on the size/style of their boat) with our dedicated delivery captains. Strong's has our own internal delivery sheet that we utilize in conjunction with the manufacturer's delivery sheets. We go over all systems and make sure all is well during the delivery process (before, during and after) and identify discrepancies that we can "make right" before clients take possession of their boat.

After the initial orientation/delivery, which depending on the size of the boat is between one and four hours, the rest of the instruction time is scheduled directly between the client and their delivery captain to accommodate both schedules. That time can be utilized to practice docking, fishing (or learning how to drift), wakeboarding/tubing/waterskiing, how to dock at an on-water restaurant, instruction on how to best utilize the electronics purchased for the boat, and more!

**Results:**

We have happy clients who feel comfortable using their boats and who enjoy going out and spending time with their family and friends on the water. We don't want clients who purchase and then let their boat sit in the slip because they are uncomfortable going out on their own or fear returning to their dock.

CLIENT: \_\_\_\_\_  
BOAT: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
DELIVERY PERSON: \_\_\_\_\_



**DELIVERY CAPTAIN INSPECTION & ORIENTATION CHECKLIST**

DLR		SIST		DLR		SIST	
INSP	NOT	EXPE		INSP	NOT	EXPE	
<b>Power, Propulsion, and Starting</b>				<b>Cabin Systems and Components</b>			
			Battery Switches				Battery Charger
			Shore Power AC/DC Panel Operation				Fresh Water System
			Generator Operation				Hot Water Heater
			Engine Starting Procedures				Head System/Macerator
			Engine Operation				Air Conditioner
			Throttles (upper/lower stations)				Refrigerator
<b>Operation</b>							
			Trim Tabs/K-Planes				Cabin Heater
			Dashboard Instrumentation				Stove
			VHF Radio				Blender
			Ignition Stop Switch				TV/DVD
			Navigation Lights				Central Vacuum
			Depth Sounder				Microwave
			GPS/Plotter	<b>Cockpit Systems and Components</b>			
			Spotlight				Livewells/Baitwells
			Bow Docking Lights				Salt/Fresh Water Washdown
			Windshield Wipers				Transom Shower
			Bilge Pump				Cockpit Lighting
							Canvas/Bimini/Camper Top Install
							Seat Adjustment

Boat achieves engine manufacturers' recommended RPM at wide open throttle (W.O.T.)  
W.O.T. RPM: Starboard (single): \_\_\_\_\_ Middle: \_\_\_\_\_ Port: \_\_\_\_\_

R.V. antifreeze flushed from boat's freshwater system.

Provided a Delivery sea trial, explaining boat operation and handling.

Do you have any questions on the Owners Manuals that you were given? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any questions on your boat & engine warranty?

Do you have any questions on required routine maintenance?

Please return Mft. Surveys if not 100% delighted, **please let us know & give us the chance to make it right!**

\* Captain's Notes to Service:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Client Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Delivery Captain Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*We go over all systems and make sure all is well during the delivery process (before, during and after) and identify discrepancies that we can "make right" before clients take possession of their boat.*

## MARKETING & EVENTS

### Paula Fulton

#### BMC Boats

#### Post-Show Demo Days

#### Best Idea:

Our idea is very simple but packs a powerful punch: Have a huge demo day the weekend after a boat show for all your prospective buyers.

#### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

We advertised at our October boat show that we would be having a demo day at a nearby marina the following weekend. We made a big sign and fliers with an RSVP sign up so we would know how much food and refreshments to provide. At the event, we brought 14 boats on land that could have easily been put into the water if needed and six boats in the water ready to demo. Basically, we had a mini boat show with boats in the water for demo. We cooked hotdogs and hamburgers and provided drinks for free. The marina was about 15 minutes from our location, so getting boats there was cost effective.

#### Results:

We ran 18 families in boats, wrote two deals and got several other people closer to buying a boat. The advertising budget was about \$1000 including Google AdWords, social networking, fliers, emails, phone calls, food, drinks, employees and expenses to get boats there and run them. Compared to other events and boat shows, this was a very cost-effective event that allowed people to get out on the water and get a taste of boating.

**BMC Boats Presents**  
**2011 Summer Demo Daze & Boat Closeout Sale**  
**Saturday - October 1st, 9am - 5pm**

*Bring the whole family and ride your favorite style boat.  
New and selected pre-owned Boats on land and water.*

*Also, FREE food and refreshments for all participants.*

**Featuring NEW 2011 and 2012 Models**

**Bayliner**

**Hurricane**

**Key West**

**Yamaha Jet**

**Rinker**

**Sweetwater**

**DEMO LOCATION**  
Monroe Harbour Marina  
531 N. Palmetto Ave.  
Sanford, FL 32771

**R.S.V.P. TO:**  
**407-585-3190 or**  
**info@bmcboats.com**

**Sponsored By**  
**BMC BOATS**  
3175 N. Hwy 1792  
Longwood, FL 32750

**WWW.BMCBOATS.COM**



**Nancy Smith**  
**Colorado Boat Center**  
**Boat Show Leads** →

**When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

Boat show leads are always a challenge. Some of the sales team is very good at asking for names and phone numbers and writing them down, and others are not. Most people do not spend money to buy tickets and pay for parking and extras if they do not have a reason (interest) for being there, even if they are not planning to buy a boat that year.

Colorado Boat Center had several pirate treasure maps left over from a pirate theme years ago, and the 2011 Denver Boat Show theme was pirates, so a light bulb lit up with the idea to use the maps as a lead generator.

On one side of the sheet was the printed map. On the other, half of the sheet was for the customer name and email address and the other half listed deposit discounts and Colorado Boat Center's website. Each sales person was provided with treasure maps. When they had a potential buyer who was not going to purchase that day, they handed a treasure map to the consumer and asked them to complete the information for drawings on deposit discounts. It was a very low-key approach that put the paper in the customer's hands and empowered them to share their information. The sheet was then torn in half, and the customer received the website address and deposit discounts, while the other half was placed in a wicker basket for the drawing. There were four larger deposit discounts drawn and the remaining received \$100 discounts. Everyone was a winner!

**Results:**

At the end of the show, there were 147 lead sheets, which produced seven immediate boat sales. The salesperson with the most leads at the end of the show received a monetary spiff, which encouraged them to use the maps. The promotion was so successful in generating leads and people to the website that the program was used at the next show and then slightly revamped and continued in-house. All leads are continually followed up on, so the leads generated will produce several sales over time.



**Cathy Hayes**  
**Hayes Marine**  
**Boat-In Movie Night** →

**When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

To demonstrate and amplify the exceptional benefits and fun of the boating lifestyle we have to get people to the lake. In an attempt to get more people to our lake, we began the Boat-In Movie Theater. We had our inaugural event Labor Day weekend 2010, and we planned three events for 2011. To accomplish this event we partnered with Wildwood Park, a local county park, to provide a space large enough for the 30-foot inflatable screen as well as to accommodate a large number of anchored boaters. The event was free if you came by sea and \$3 by land. There were also several other corporate sponsors to defray the costs of the inflatable screen and movie rental. The movie began at dusk and was preceded by karaoke.

**Results:**

We were thrilled with every aspect of the inaugural event. We had over 60 boats in attendance and the crowd was well-behaved. The attendees were definitely enjoying themselves as many came equipped with a grill to prepare dinner, some boats tied up to one another for a group event and many families were in attendance. We had such positive feedback from attendees as well as people who were not able to attend that we are excited to offer three Boat-Ins this year. Additionally, we have been approached by other corporate sponsors who are interested in participating.





## Ready, Set, Boat!

Lake Union Sea Ray would like to thank you again for visiting our display at the Boat Show. Because you have expressed a genuine interest in our boats, we would like to offer you an exclusive opportunity which includes a post boat show redemption voucher with incentives.

Industry research shows that boat shows are a key influencer in the decision-making process because of consumers' ability to compare prices and models. We are confident that Lake Union Sea Ray and our knowledgeable sales team have made a positive impact on your boat ownership experience.

Please accept this voucher and the additional incentives below towards the purchase of your new boat from Lake Union Sea Ray.

- One Additional Year of Free Extended Warranty
- Free Coast Guard Safety Kit
- One Night Free Moorage at Beautiful Roche Harbor Marina\*
- Special Day of Delivery Discounts and Ready, Set, Boat! Gift Package.

Your sales associate will be contacting you to review your special post show redemption offer. Some models have sold out and other models have a limited supply. This offer is exclusive and non-transferable. In order to take advantage of your extended boat show price and incentives you must present this voucher at time of purchase.

\*One night free moorage after one night paid moorage with two nights stay. Restrictions apply. For reservations, call (800) 586-2586.

5423

**LAKE UNION**  
*Sea Ray*

PAY TO THE ORDER OF \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

REDEMPTION DATE \_\_\_\_\_

BOAT SHOW EXTENDED DISCOUNT DOLLARS \_\_\_\_\_

BOAT PURCHASER \_\_\_\_\_ MANAGER'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

BOAT MODEL \_\_\_\_\_ EXPIRATION DATE \_\_\_\_\_

⑆ 4 25980671 ⑆ 501044460 ⑆ 5423

Redeemable only at Lake Union Sea Ray by Boat Purchaser for Boat Model listed on voucher prior to expiration date. Redemption voucher must have final authorization from VP of Sales. No cash value.

## Kay Woltman Lake Union Sea Ray Ready, Set, Boat!

### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

This time last year, NMMA released a Boating Industry Marketing Communications Influence Study that measured the influence of marketing communication channels on the purchase behavior of new boats specifically during boat shows. The 2010 Boat Show Purchase Influence Report provided us with invaluable information that played a critical role in our post-boat show sales and marketing efforts.

The research indicated that 70 percent of buyers who had attended a boat show pur-

chased a new boat within three months of attending the show. In addition, boat shows draw qualified buyers and provide the ONLY marketing channel that lets buyers compare their boat options (price/brand/models) side by side. From this research we developed a unique post-boat show follow-up program that allows Lake Union Sea Ray to stay top-of-mind with boat show "deposit" customers and key prospects. We call this direct response campaign Ready, Set, Boat! The main focus of the campaign is to turn boat show shoppers into owners before our competition does.

Ready, Set, Boat! is a two-part direct response strategy including mail, email and phone calls with immediate follow-up to our boat show guests. We target two very different customer types that are defined by their sales stage (posi-

tion within the buying cycle) as noted in our lead database, Footsteps.

Direct mail cards are sent to only boat show customers/prospects. The cards are received within a week from the last day of the show. The idea is to stand out from our competition. As the research states, boat show consumers are comparing price and models. We expect that every boat dealer is contacting their boat show prospects by phone and email throughout the 90-day post-boat show window. Lake Union Sea Ray's Ready, Set, Boat! campaign allows for a more advanced follow-up process that includes mail, email and phone. Having a targeted direct-mail piece based on sales stage plus exclusive post-show offers provide incentives that are unique to Lake Union Sea Ray.

### Direct Mail #1: Day of Delivery

**Mail Recipient:** Sales Stage: Boat Show Customers with Sales Stage of Deposit/Sold Not Delivered

**Goal:** The purpose of this piece is to move our deposit and sold/not delivered customers along as if they are taking delivery of their boat. The message conveys peace of mind, no regrets and looking forward to ownership and how easy Lake Union Sea Ray makes this process. The card includes special parts and accessories offers and a special gift at time of delivery (Waggoner Cruising Guide). This is a "feel good" piece that will hopefully move Deposit Customers into Delivered status.

### Direct Mail #2: Exclusive Extended Boat Show Prices/Post Boat Show Redemption Voucher

**Sales Stage:** Boat Show Customers with Sales Stage of Quoted and Hot Prospects.

**Goal:** This is an unadvertised, exclusive and non-transferable offer specific to the prospect and the boat model of interest. In addition to the money voucher, we are offering additional incentives that were not offered at the boat show. This piece screams, "We want your business and you must act fast!"

**Execution:** A "teaser" email was sent to each customer letting them know that special incentives and discounts are coming in the mail.

Both direct mail pieces are hand addressed



and self-stamped by the salesperson.

Salespeople are able to include their business card in both direct mail pieces.

Each salesperson is able to use Footsteps as a reference and checklist. Each salesperson is provided a report generated from Footsteps of who their Boat Show leads are and their current sales stage.

Once the direct mail piece is mailed, each salesperson follows up with a phone call to review the incredible offers and incentives available only through the mailed cards.

### Results:

After completing the Ready, Set, Boat! campaign, we found the program to be a success in that we achieved our second-highest percentage of delivered boats following a boat show (total number of new boats delivered in Q1).

Although all boat shows are important to our business, the Seattle Boat Show is by far the largest selling event for Western Washington's marine industry. The 10-day show is historically hosted the last week in January through the first week in February. For Lake Union Sea Ray, boat shows equate to roughly 36 percent of our annual unit sales and 32 percent of annual dollars for new boat sales.

In addition, the number of leads we capture during this short timeframe is critical to the ongoing success of our annual sales. We feel that providing our sales team with a direct response follow-up campaign further motivates them to capture every customer's contact information. During the 10-day show, the Lake Union Sea Ray sales team captured 461 new leads that were not already in our Footsteps database. In addition, we worked with 47 existing customers/prospects for a deposit or sold status during the show. Of the 508 customers we "touched" during the show, we captured 255 mailing addresses (exactly 50 percent) and 450 emails, or 89 percent.

The Ready, Set, Boat! strategy provides us three key sales and marketing elements we find to be successful. 1) Motivation to capture complete contact information including mailing address and emails from all leads. 2) A planned follow-up process that provides our sales team with necessary closing tools. 3) Increased overall sales by staying top-of-mind with boat show customers.

This is a marketing strategy that we will continue to use for every major boat show and/or sales event.



### **Kimberley Green** **Deep Creek Marina** **Off-Season Rental Discount**

#### **When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

Our "Best Idea" was implemented in the spring of 2010. We made coupons with our logo on them with a discount for every single rental home company on Deep Creek Lake, and we physically hand delivered them to every rental company here. We made sure we got to know the people who do the reservations and offered them free boat rentals to pass out our coupons to their customers. Throughout the season we followed up and made sure a supply of our regular rate cards were at their counters and during the off season we had special-made discount cards delivered.

#### **Results:**

During the pre- and post-season, our rentals were still going strong. We rented many more boats than we normally would have and increased our rental profit with offering a small discount to keep our boats on the water. Having the rental people experience Deep Creek Marina made it more likely that they would recommend our boats and feel more comfortable discussing our business with their customers.

### **Dale T. Thomas** **Laurel Marina** **Poker Run Event**

#### **When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

Would you like to win \$1,000 for spending a day on the lake? Many people in the Laurel Marina Dealership and Laurel Marina & Yacht Club re-

gion have decided they would and come out to the Poker Run benefitting Bristol Motor Speedway's Chapter of Speedway Children's Charities every year. The Laurel team wanted to develop a weekend event with a few objectives. The first is to serve the community by helping a charitable organization, and the second is to enhance the lake experience and lifestyle of Laurel boat owners by providing another event on the lake besides a national holiday.

The general public and all boaters, including competitors' patrons, are also invited to attend with their family and friends. We just completed our seventh annual fundraiser for the organization, and it continues to grow every year. The event has been profitable for the dealership and the marina every year, while averaging more than \$10,000 per year over the past three years for a charitable donation to Speedway Children's Charities. The organization was founded to help children in the area surrounding Bristol Motor Speedway.

We sponsor a full day of activities, and the day begins with the Poker Run on the lake with prizes for the top five winners, including a \$1,000 purse for the best hand. This year we had more than 50 watercraft participate, with numerous family and friends aboard. For the card stations on the lake, we use boats from the dealership or sold from the dealership. (This gives Laurel Marina Dealership and our boat brands added exposure.) The last card station is at Laurel Marina & Yacht Club. We have a special cookout at the marina when participants arrive back. Sales from food and drinks generate increased revenue for the marina store, "The Galley."

The afternoon and evening events include a live auction and "Music at the Marina" with a live band performing. (Food and drinks are served throughout the evening.) The winners for the Poker Run are announced at the beginning of the auction. This gives the winner of the





\$1,000 the opportunity to use his/her winnings to bid on items. Proceeds from the live auction also benefit Speedway Children's Charities. Regional businesses donate cash and items for the auction. The money donated is used to buy boating accessories and lake toys (wakeboards, skis, tubes, etc.) for the auction from the Laurel Marina Dealership. This is an opportunity for Laurel Marina Dealership to move slower-moving inventory. Other items for the auction include golf packages, race day suite packages, a year of slip rental, and electric grills and smokers, just to mention a few.

This is another opportunity for Laurel Marina Dealership prospects to be invited to attend and enjoy the boating/lake lifestyle. Boat demos can also be arranged for those interested. We have new and used boats in the water to increase interest. This is very popular for prospects to enjoy, especially when listening to the band performing from the demo boats. We also have boats on display in the parking lot as guests arrive for the day.

## Results:

As previously stated, this event has been profitable for the dealership and the marina every year and gives the Laurel Marina Dealership extra exposure to a target audience interested in the boating lifestyle.

As an added bonus, the local NBC and FOX television stations provide free publicity for the events and invite Dale Thomas, owner and general manager, to the studio to discuss the day's activities live on air during the week prior to the event. Other media outlets help promote the event as well through events calendars and articles.

An event sponsored with The Bristol Motor Speedway has an amazing draw with people in our region. BMS promotes this event on their huge electronic billboard at the track, on their website, and through their newsletter for up to

two weeks prior to the event. Laurel Marina is recognized as a BMS Children's Charities sponsor at the BMS August Night Race and at the BMS Charities Event the night the donations are distributed to the various agencies in the region. This provides the Laurel Marina Dealership exposure to the numerous business connections, sponsors and executives associated with Bristol Motor Speedway.

## Kay Woltman Lake Union Sea Ray Kid's Docking Challenge

### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

In addition to boat sales and service, we dedicate a lot of time and annual budget to boaters' education. We feel that it is our responsibility to make certain boaters and their families are boating smart, safely and with confidence. We also feel passionate about the Grow Boating initiative.

For the first time, Lake Union Sea Ray launched a Kid's Docking Challenge during our annual Demo Days sales event. Like Women in Boating, the Kid's Docking Challenge is designed to make children more comfortable with the basics of boating. We provide hands on, active instruction in a supportive and fun atmosphere. Our goal is for kids and parents to gain knowledge to be a successful, independent boater and active participant in their family's boating experience.

The Kid's Docking Challenge allowed kids ages 12-15 to get excited about docking a 45-foot sport yacht all by themselves. It also provided parents the opportunity to learn about the latest docking technologies, such as Zeus and Sky Hook. Parents could see firsthand how easy it truly is to dock with joystick control. So easy ... even their kid can do it!

## Results:

Studies show that 60 percent of current boat owners participated in boating as a child. By encouraging children to get excited about boating, it will increase the amount of time families spend on their boat and will also aid in the child being a boater for life.

Although we did not sell a boat from the

## Kid's Docking Challenge



Kid's Docking Challenge, we feel strongly that offering continued boater's education and safety courses is our responsibility to the boating community. Having a terrific experience at one of our events keeps customers and prospects coming back for more. Moreover, there are no other dealers in our market that host events designed to increase boating education and awareness.

Participants at our events tend to stay in touch with our dealership and their salesperson of record. Whether they purchased a boat from us or another dealership, they maintain a relationship with us through our events. We believe these relationships will turn into a boat purchase and continued service through our parts and service departments. In addition, these customers/prospects tend to be advocates of Lake Union Sea Ray.

## Butch Parks Parks Marina The Social Media Trifecta

### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

Today's customer wants to be informed easily and quickly, and on an even more personal level than ever before. Through the use of social media, Parks Marina is able to make a significant connection with our customers. Our goal is to



email blasts



be able to respond to our customers faster and more directly. Social media has allowed us to do that. It's less about selling ourselves to the customer and more about providing an avenue in which they are able know our businesses on a personal level.

It's fun for the customer to be able to view new boats as soon as they arrive to the showroom or to click through a photo album of an event and see themselves in our pictures. Through this past year, we have found that the most effective way to reach our customers is by using a three-tiered approach: email blasts, YouTube videos and Facebook pages. Each of these approaches allows us to utilize a different aspect of social media marketing. We are able to keep our marketing approach fun, fresh and consistent.

## Email Blasts

To make your email blasts really work, try using the three C's: Consistency, Content and Creativity.

**Consistency:** Our weekly email campaign is a way for us to offer consistency to our customers. Every week, our customers are guaranteed that they will receive an informative email from us that includes the latest developments from our boat brands, information on specials we may be running, important news that affects their boating experience and what's to come at the marina.

**Content:** It is important for us to keep these emails as informative as possible. Quality content is our highest priority. To ensure that we get the most "opens" we possibly can, we do our best to create emails that contain the kind of information our customers want to receive from us. Our most opened weekly emails are those that contain our owner and CEO Butch Parks' monthly newsletter. Instead of your typical email advertisement, these emails are open letters written from Butch, directly to his customers.

When Butch talks, people listen. Such topics as the latest industry developments, current events planned at our marina or Butch's future plans for the company are often included. This "letter-writing" approach helps help keep our email personal, while still offering the consistent, up-to-date information our customers crave.

**Creativity:** We've also found success with

*To date we are running three separate pages, one for The Barefoot Bar, our Okoboji Tiki-themed bar; one for Parks Marina; and also one for Okoboji Boat Works Marina, boasting a total of 7,291 fans and growing daily.*

emails that include creative subject lines. An email is only effective if it is opened. A recent email that was sent out with "FREE WINTER STORAGE" in the subject line brought a significant increase in the number of opens. We also caught people's attention with "Butch is Retiring!" Retiring, that is, our old wooden ferryboat that served as our Water Taxi for so many years.

Finally, we really shocked customers when we played an April Fool's joke on them. Butch claimed that he was selling the marina and moving to Key West. He was, of course, joking but customers came back again and again to read the joke and forward it on to their friends. Stick with the Three C's and you'll have email blast success!

## YouTube

YouTube with humor! Our YouTube marketing campaigns have always been used to keep the humor and fun in what we do. They're easy to find, just head over to YouTube, search "Parks Marina" and our videos pop right up. It's always fun to show off a new boat model in a fun way.

We had particular success in using YouTube to introduce Cobalt's hydraulic swim platform on their A25. In a play off the Darth Vader Volvo commercial, we shot a video in which little Darth Vader came to visit Parks Marina. This was a great way for us to showcase our marina, the shop inside and our showroom full of boats. We made sure our customers saw the video by first

splitting it in to two parts. We named the first half "Episode One" and the second half "Episode Two." We released "Episode One," waited two weeks, and then released "Episode Two." Splitting the video left our customers wanting more and helped guarantee they'd come back to see the rest of the video. We were able to put together a fun "commercial" featuring the Cobalt A25, a new product to the market that we were very excited about. We also tie in our YouTube videos with our email blasts by using the videos in the blasts. This way, it's not the same old email ad every week. The videos add another layer of information to our e-mails. YouTube videos also allow us to sell to our customers by making them laugh, instead of going the traditional route. Parks Marina has always emphasized the fun, family time that boating creates. The more you make people laugh, the more likely they are to forward them to their friends! And if we at Parks Marina are having fun with boating, so are our customers.

## Facebook

This brings us to our last tier, our Facebook Pages. Facebook is today's most used "free" social marketing tool. It's easy, convenient and you don't have to be a computer whiz to figure it out. Facebook also boasts over 800 million active users, a number that grows every day, with over 50 percent of those Facebook users logging in to Facebook multiple times every single day. The opportunities for your business on Facebook are huge. However, that huge potential customer base, the ease of use and convenience all mean only one thing: if you're going to have a successful Facebook Page, you need to be ready to work at it. Parks Marina has had success with our Facebook campaign for several reasons. To date we are running three separate pages, one for The Barefoot Bar, our Okoboji Tiki-themed bar; one for Parks Marina; and also one for Okoboji Boat Works Marina, boasting a total of 7,291 fans and growing daily. One of the biggest benefits of running three separate Facebook pages is the cross-promotion it allows us to do.

By "tagging" our other locations in different posts, we have the chance to expose that location to a separate customer base and grow our



fan numbers – all of whom are potential boat owners! Like our emails, we do our best to post useful information for our customers. This year we posted a “Winter Service Checklist” to educate our fans on important boat service information. Within 24 hours that post alone had been read or seen by our fans over 1,100 times. The “impressions” are almost immediate!

When it came time for our annual Crownline Rendezvous, we posted a registration link on our Facebook pages. As a result, a significant number of Crownline owners pre-registered for our event, well before anyone had received their formal, paper invitation.

Facebook is also where our customers are going to feel the most personal connection to us. It is here that we post photos from our customer events, pictures of new boat models as they arrive to Parks Marina and status updates on the day-to-day happenings at our different locations. Customers are also able to comment on photos, ask questions or even sound off on something they’re unhappy about. By commenting on our Facebook pages, customers are more likely to get an immediate, real-time response. This also helps create a sense of community on our pages. Our customers are not out there alone with questions or concerns and often it is our fans that respond before we do.

How does it all tie together? Think of a circle: all of our email blasts post to Facebook, our Facebook links to our YouTube account and website, our website links to our Facebook pages and back around again. It’s a continuous circle of information our customers can easily access, and the more times and ways we reach them, the better. Customers can jump in at any point on the circle and find the information they’re looking for. We want to touch as many customers as possible, always staying in front of them so Park Marina is their first thought when it comes time to buy that boat.

## Results:

Our “Social Media Trifecta” has offered new and exciting challenges over this past year. And, ultimately, it has helped us create and increase a customer base that is better informed and more connected to us than ever before. This process has not been without its hard work and challenges, but we’ve learned a lot and our marketing strategy is better for it. In the coming year we plan to master our current avenues of social media and then expand our efforts. Next up: Butch’s Blog!

## FINALIST

### Rob Soucy Port Harbor Marine Used In-Water Boat Show

#### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

Several years ago, our facility was the site of an in-water boat show. We would lease the marina out to a promoter who would promote the show and several local dealers would come to display their inventory. The format of the show was your typical boat show with new boat inventory and vendors.

In the early 90s the show died, so we decided to create our own – but rather than new boats we decided to display used boats. We would display our own used boat inventory and also invite customers who had their boats listed on brokerage with us to display their boat as well. The show was free of charge to them to display their boat as long as they had an updated listing agreement and were willing to “work” the show aboard their own boat. After all, who knows their boat better than the actual owner? We also made the show free of charge to attendees, including free parking, eliminating any objection or barrier to attending. The fact that it was a used boat show allowed us to promote the show to a wide audience and a wide geographic region. The show allows for a large number of boats and several different styles, makes and models, many of which we would not typically offer.

The results from the first year to this day have been incredible, and we have averaged double-digit unit sales each year. Having such a large number of boats, and broad range of prices, allows there to be something for everyone. We hold the show late in September at the end of our boating season, so customers who are displaying their boats know this is their best chance of selling their boat before the winterization and storage season. They come ready to sell. They also get to hear firsthand what people like or dislike about their boat.

Another huge benefit is the excitement and urgency the show creates in the weeks and days leading up to the show. Customers who have been looking at a certain used boat feel more pressure when they start seeing the ads and promotional material for the show, and the fear of loss really kicks in. It is very common for us to sell four to five boats ahead of the show because of this.



*The results from the first year to this day have been incredible, and we have averaged double-digit unit sales each year.*

The pre-show promotion also creates a lot of new listings for our brokerage business. Boaters who want to sell their boats and see the advertisements call to find out how they can be a part of the show. This past season we added 35 new listings to our offering because of the show.

Several years ago we also added a Nautical Flea Market to the show. All of our used outboards and leftover or distressed marine store inventory items are displayed in a flea market setting and sold at huge discounts. The idea is to get rid of it so we can make room for sellable inventory.

Because we have the marina on site and resources to handle a large number of units, this show has been a success. The in-water aspect adds to the excitement and customer draw but usually 50 percent of the boats sold are part of the land display, so even highway location dealers could hold this type of event. The key is the brokerage boats and getting the owners to be on site and ready to deal.





**James Baker**  
**Seattle Boat Company**

**“Friend” Event to “Sea to Tee”  
Golf Tournament**

**When and How the  
Idea Was Implemented:**

At Seattle Boat Company, we are always looking to create fresh new events for our customers that encourage them to get out on their boats and experience the lifestyle. What we have learned is that encouraging an event that includes using your boat plus bringing friends who are not necessarily boaters into the fold was a homerun! We developed our first ever Golf by Boat Tournament, which was held on Aug. 25, 2011, at a course that could be accessed by boat. The format of the tournament was a team scramble that was organized by boat. Each owner formed their own four-person team to enter the tournament, whether the team members were customers or not. What we discovered was that this opened their friends’ eyes to boating, plus showed the customer other activities they could combine with boating.



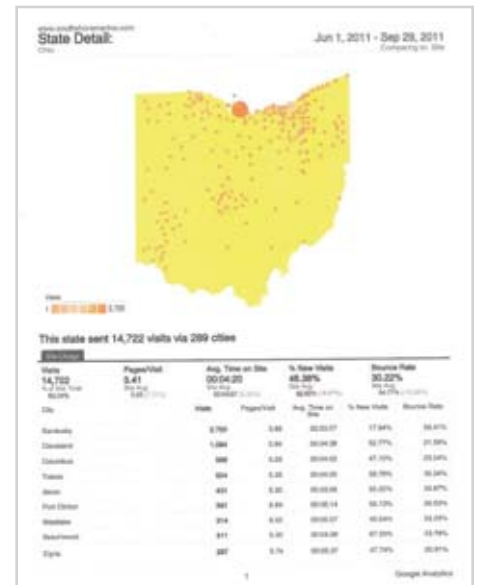
**Results:**

We are working on sales directly related to the event plus we were able to capture information from qualified leads that we wouldn’t have had the opportunity to without this event. This event became an efficient and fun way to capture referrals from existing customers.

**Jen Keefe**  
**South Shore Marine**  
**Target Marketing Perfected**

**Best Idea:**

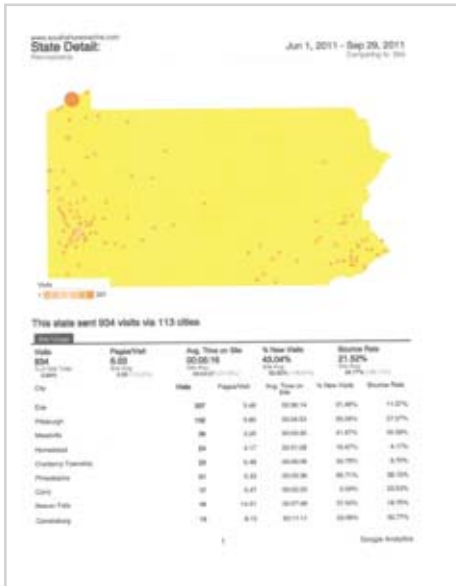
Using Google Analytics to get the most targeted market data available is proving to be a valuable tool in forecasting where to focus our marketing efforts. Using this free service to track Web ac-



tivity is not exactly a new idea ... we actually heard about its usefulness from the 2011 Best Ideas White Paper ... fine-tuning the results and exploring the various reports has led us to discover some priceless information. The most exciting data we have come across to date is being able to see right down to the zip code where our Web traffic is coming from. This has been a real eye opener to some areas that we may have not been focusing on in marketing to that are CLEARLY focusing on us!

**When and How the  
Idea Was Implemented:**

This will prove to be invaluable as we prepare the 2012 Marketing Plan and Budget. These reports will negate any guesswork about where to focus our Web advertising dollars and what areas to reach out to. What will be even more exciting to watch in 2012 is how our boat sales correspond with the marketing we will do in the high traffic areas!

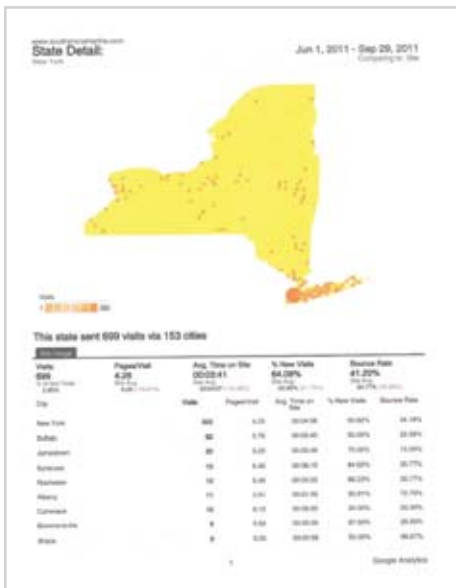


## Patty Reeve Strong's Marine NY Boat Show Preview Party

### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

We began this premiere event two years ago to be held on the evening prior to the opening day of the New York Boat Show at a well-known NYC restaurant. The event provides a way to bring Strong's Marine into NYC and to be able to stand out in our client's minds, offering them more of an intimate, welcoming environment where they can speak to key owners/members of Cobalt, Pursuit, Regal, Volvo, GE Financial and others. (The brands we carry and they are interested in.)

As a family-owned and operated company, we carry products from companies that also re-



### Results:

You will have to stay tuned in 2012 to see the results of this best practice! But the outcome is expected to be increased Web traffic in areas where we have "boater fans"... and ultimately more phone calls, walk-ins and sales! Check out the included images to get a taste of what can be done with Google Analytics ... and we've just hit the tip of the iceberg ... there's still so much room for exploring new metrics.

spect and practice the same values and offer the best quality. Most of our clients maintain a residence or work in NYC, so for us to be able to bring an event to them was important to us, as we have a satellite location in Port Washington but our other three locations are further out east on Long Island.

One of our prospects was upset that they didn't make the event; however, I put them in touch with one of the manufacturer's and they were surprised that we'd do that. I said, "That's what we are here for." We offer raffle prizes that are donated by our sponsors/vendors to help create a special feeling for our guests. As an example, Regal donated a week(end) at their private home in a luxurious location, Cobalt offered their pre-

mium Cobalt Wine, Pursuit gave us items to put together two large gift baskets and more.

### Results:

The first year was 2010 and clients thought that it was a great idea and appreciated the fact that we came to them, so to speak, and that we offer that intimate setting for our clients to speak with the people who represent and build the product they own or are looking to purchase. Our manufacturers agreed with our efforts as presidents, our reps and more all attended both our January 2010 and January 2011 events.

# WINNER!



**Eric Splatt**  
Woodard Marine  
Personalized  
Microsoft Tags

## When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

Technology seems to change so fast each year. At the beginning of 2011, we noticed Microsoft scan "tags" were showing up in our manufacturer's catalogs and print materials. We decided that we also needed to be on top of our game with this technology.

We have been utilizing our YouTube channel with a video walkthrough on all of our boats for a few years now, but we knew there was another step to bring our dealership to the top in our area. A Microsoft tag was our answer. We decided to make our own personalized tags that linked to our video walkthroughs.

We implemented our personalized tags by creating our own account on the Microsoft tag site, which is free!

We logged onto our Microsoft tag site and uploaded our Woodard Marine YouTube videos. This step creates custom tags for each boat model that we sold (new and pre-owned). We then saved the image of our tags as a JPG file. Next we inserted our tags into our sales fliers and marketing materials. This whole process takes about one minute from start to finish!

We even made larger than life tags and put them on the physical boat with the walkthrough of the boat in our showroom and sales fliers for the boats (this worked great during the winter months so customers could see the walkthrough of our boats when they were in winter storage).

We then took this tag to the next level in our service and rental department.

In our service department, on all jobs that were over \$1,000, we videotaped the service manager or service technician telling the customer about the job that we completed and our recommendations to keep their boat running great. We then created a tag with this video and inserted it into the repair order. With our new ADP Lightspeed system, it allows you to insert graphical files onto the repair order and print them out. When we cashiered a repair order, we could either email or print a copy for the customer. When the repair order was printed, the Microsoft tag was front and center on the repair order and the customer could scan the tag and see their own technician telling them about their boat and repair.

Again, in our rental department we saw these tags as another opportunity for communication. In the past we have utilized our FM transmitter in our rental department to have customers listen to our radio station, which told customers how to use their boats and the rules and regulations. This year, we have installed a large tag sticker on each rental boat next to the ignition key switch. The customer can scan the tag with their phone and see our rental manager on video going over the rental rules, regulations and reminders. It is a great way to visually give our customers a greater comfort level with our dealership.

## Results:

These tags were very popular at our boat shows in the spring of 2011, where we first implemented them. During boat shows, when our booth was busy, we had greeters with iPads and tablets. The greeter would meet our potential customers. While waiting for a salesperson, the



Get the free mobile app at  
<http://gettag.mobi>

greeter would scan the tags on our boats and show the customers our video walkthroughs on the boats with the tablets. We also noticed a lot of our customers in our booth staying a little longer to look at our products as they were using

their own phone to scan the tag to get more information on our boats.

This was also very popular with our pre-owned boats at the boat shows, as the boats were not physically there to view. The tags were on our pre-owned boat fliers for every used boat that we had for sales. This gave a personalized view of our pre-owned boats.

In our service department, we feel this gave a personalized touch and confidence to our customers.

We are going to take this to the next level next year utilizing the tags for text for coupons at our fuel dock, service center and rental building. (You scan the tag and get a text message with a coupon code for a Woodard Marine promotion. This scan gives Woodard Marine your email and phone number for future promotions.)

In our events, we are going to be doing a "smart" scavenger hunt on our lake – we will have tags posted around the lake with video hints at each stop when you scan the tag with your smartphone or tablet.

All of this was possible with a little bit of time and a Flip camera for under \$100!



## SALES AND F&I

### Jerry Brouwer Action Water Sports Boat Show iPad App

#### Best idea:

Creating an iPad app for generating quotes at boat shows – or anywhere else.

#### How it was implemented:

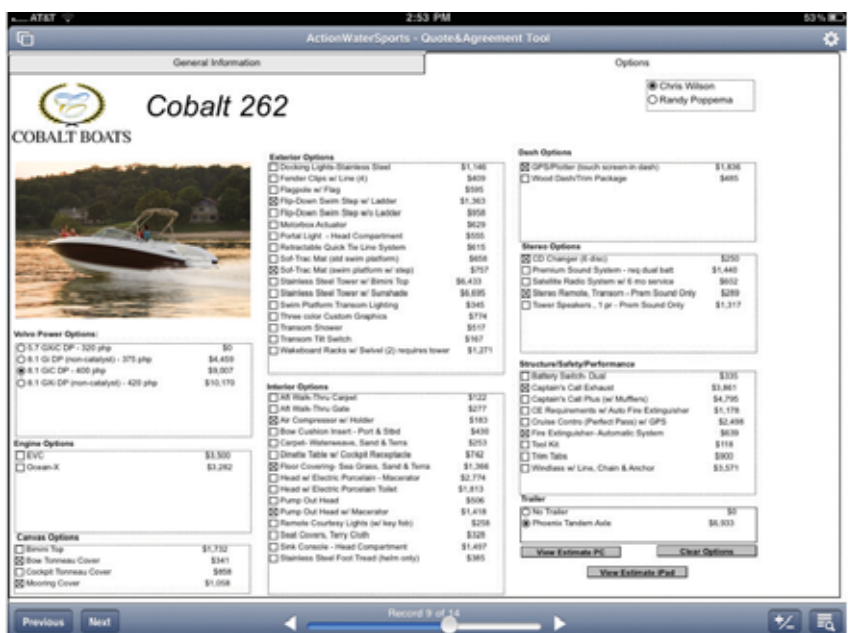
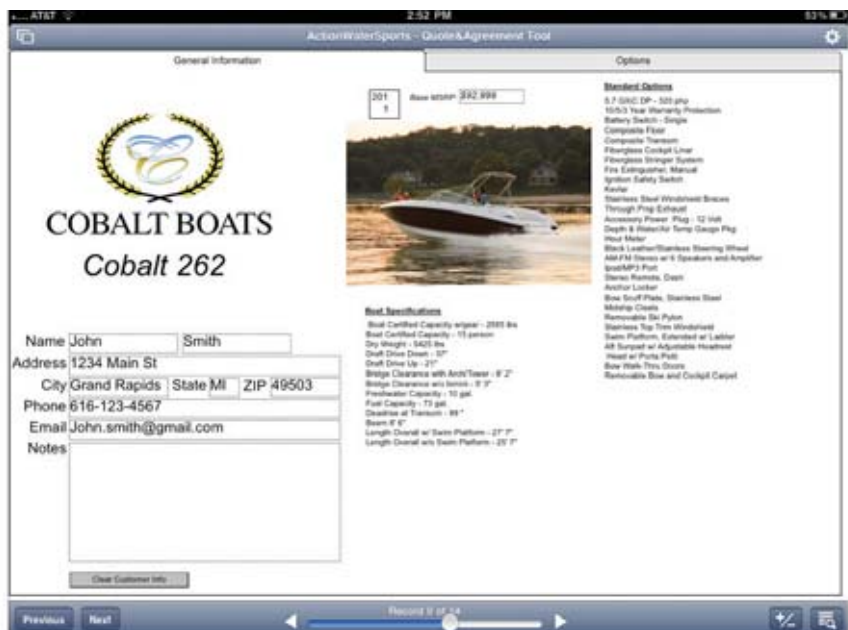
The iPad app was written for our 2011 boat shows with FileMaker Pro. It has the ability to create a quote for our entire new boat inventory from anywhere in our booth.

#### Here's how it works:

1. Open the app and select the manufacturer and boat model.
2. Capture the lead's information.
3. Begin selecting options. Select the salesman and click "view estimate on iPad."
4. This brings up the quote on screen with dealership and salesman info as well as full quote information. There is one blank left open on this screen to add a "fall discount" or "boat show discount" to provide a personal discount.
5. The quote is then sent wirelessly to a printer elsewhere in our booth.

#### Results:

The iPad offers the best solution for quoting leads on a new boat from the comfort of the boat – versus walking the customer to a makeshift closing booth or into a sales office. Our sales staff can continue to sell on emotion with the family sitting in their favorite model until hitting the print button.





**Travis Hayes**  
Hayes Marine  
Hayes Marine Heroes Program

### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

Hayes Marine is located just outside of Augusta, Ga. We have a large military installation in Au-



gusta and a large segment of our customers are active-duty military. Several of these customers, including a few who purchased boats from us, have been redeployed and needed to sell their boats. As a result of this need we developed a military brokerage/repurchase program.

### Results:

While we have not had any customers utilize this program, it is an important new service that we offer our military customers. It is our way to give back to our "Hayes Marine Heroes," and it also provides another advantage over our competitors in that we are committed to brokering or repurchasing a boat purchased from our dealership.

**Steve Yanyk**  
Regina Marine  
G.T.A. (Guaranteed Trade Allowance)

### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

This policy was developed out of necessity at our Spring Indoor Boat Show in 2009. We sell a high volume of boats in the off season when it is very difficult to deal with trades. We needed a policy that dealt with customers who wanted full retail for their potential trade-ins.

### This is how the G.T.A. works:

1. If the customer can't bring the boat for a trade evaluation, we get as many details as we can. We ask for pictures and have them fill out one of our self-evaluation trade-in forms. It accurately accounts for flaws in their potential trades and holds the customer more accountable.

2. We offer them a value that is guaranteed (based on a future mechanical inspection) for their trade. We write up the deal, including the trade, and allow them to try and sell the boat for a higher price.

3. If they sell the boat, we take it out of the deal and they make up the difference with cash.

4. If they haven't sold the boat by the day they pick up the new boat in the spring, we take their trade for the Guaranteed Trade Allowance



### Trade-in Self Evaluation Form

Please fill in the necessary info and circle all options that best describe the condition of your boat so we can provide you with an accurate estimate for your trade.

Boat Manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Serial # \_\_\_\_\_

Boat Model and Length: \_\_\_\_\_

Engine Manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Serial # \_\_\_\_\_

1. Condition of the Exterior
 

a) 1-10 minor scratches	b) More than 10 minor scratches
c) 1-3 big scratches	d) More than 3 big scratches
e) Some sun fading	f) Lots of sun fading
g) Minor hull staining	h) Major hull staining
i) Hole in the hull	j) previous major hull repairs
2. Condition of the Interior
 

a) Slight Fading	b) Excessive Fading
c) 1-2 small rips	d) More than 2 rips
e) 1-2 large rips	f) More than 2 large rips
g) Cracking Vinyl	h) Carpet is good
i) Carpet is poor	j) Floor is solid
h) Floor has soft spots	
3. Extras (only circle if they are in good working condition)
 

a) Travel Cover	b) Sun Top
c) CD Stereo	d) Fish Finder/Depth Finder
e) Trolling Motor	f) Cockpit Cover
g) Bow Cover	h) Swim Ladder
4. Trailer
 

a) Roller Style	b) Bunk Style
c) Galvanized	d) Painted
e) Spare Tire	f) Load guides
g) Lightly Rusted	h) Heavily Rusted
i) All lights work	j) Bearings are good
k) tires are good	l) tires are poor
m) boat sits above fenders	n) boat sits between fenders
5. What could you sell the boat for privately? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

we offered. They feel better about the deal, they trust us, a new boat gets sold and a trade comes in at a decent value.

We have had great success with the G.T.A. during peak season as well. If a customer wants retail for their trade, we tell them to postpone the pick-up of the new boat for a week or two and have them make an attempt to sell their boat privately. If they are lucky, they sell it right away and pick up the new boat sooner. If they don't sell it right away, they give up quickly and bring us the trade ahead of schedule so they can start enjoying their new one.

The development of the G.T.A. has awarded us a lot of deals. Customers no longer feel the dealer is trying to "steal" their trade. The customers who sell their boats are happy and the ones who end up trading their boats are happy as well. We sell them a new boat and don't have to pay too much for a trade. The G.T.A. is a winner!

### Results:

Successfully addresses people wanting too much for their trades.

## SERVICE

### FINALIST

#### **Joe Lewis** **Mount Dora Boating Center** **Assurance Program**

A market study that was done in 2004 showed less than 33 percent of boat sales are transacted through dealerships. We determined there was a pretty big market out there, so the questions we asked ourselves were “what do we have to offer?” and “how can we inject ourselves into that aspect of the business?”

Our answer was our Assurance Program, which gives us an opportunity to sell our expertise.

We created a menu of services all designed to help folks make a more informed boat purchase decision. The menu includes:

*Condition Evaluation*  
*Fluid Analysis*  
*Valuation*  
*Financing*  
*Insurance*  
*Title & Registration*  
*Sea Tow Membership*

The one aspect of this program that really was the linchpin was the MRAA certification program. That is a fluid analysis program whereby we can take an fluid sample from the engine and send the sample off to Titan Certified and get back a 104-point DNA analysis that tells us the exact operating conditions of the motor and drive.

Once the fluid samples are certified, we are able to provide the customers a three-month or 55-hour guarantee on those components. It costs us \$91 as an MRAA member to provide that service, and we are currently marketing it for \$250.

And it gives the boat buyer a real peace of mind that he’s not buying something that will cause a lot of grief.

We promoted it in places where people would shop for preowned boats and have invested about \$2,500 in marketing.

#### **Results:**

We launched the program in the fall of 2010. Since then, we’ve inspected 12 boats. Nine of those boats were purchased. Four of those 9 came in for service that was recommended through the condition evaluation. Two of those boats ended up as customers of ours in the marina. One of those boats was purchased by someone new to boating, who is now considering upgrading to a new boat from us.

Of the three who didn’t buy, one of them ended up buying a pre-owned boat from us and the other two are still looking, but guess who else is looking for them?

So, out the whole process, we gained 12 new customers, and they came to us in a whole new way. We are now viewed by them as a trusted expert who’s on their side. So the foundation of the relationship transcended the normal “sales” relationship.

#### **Rob Brown** **Clark Marine** **Extreme Detailing Services**

#### **Best Idea:**

For Clark Marine it has been one of the simplest of ideas that has made a very positive impact on our most loyal customers and rewarded our bottom line. By including extreme detailing services in our full service and storage packages, without increasing the price, we stand to increase our bottom line by \$30,000-\$40,000.

#### **When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

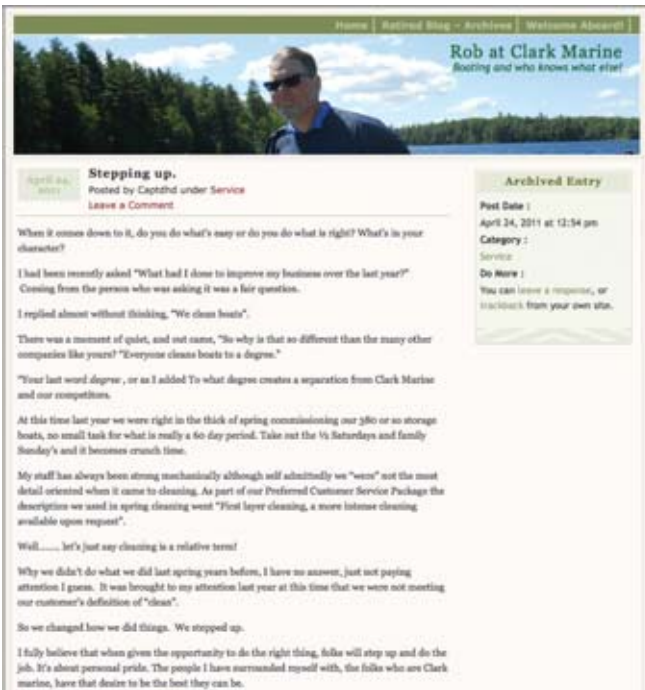
Our idea was implemented to its current degree in the spring 2010.

That spring, I was made aware by a few of my early delivery customers that they would like to have had more time spent cleaning their boats than we had done. Where the “first layer detail service” had been sufficient in the past, the same standard no longer was deemed acceptable.

With folks watching their expenditures more closely, the costs in relation to the value of their maintenance packages became increasingly scrutinized. So when confronted with making the decision to either add a value without increasing the price or to reduce the price by reducing the services, I made the decision that we would double our efforts and not only do a better job but do an exceptional job.

That has turned out to be a reasonably low-cost, high-impact decision. The intense cleanings added the “wow factor” that set Clark Marine apart once again.

That year, we anticipated a decline



Taking into account what is a traditional loss of between 8-10 percent of the total number of boats we store, we are beyond optimistic that we will see a net gain of 30-40 full service and storage boats. Our problem now shifts to where to put them. We were actually pretty close to capacity last season.

When you calculate it out, in round numbers it will add between \$30,000-\$40,000 dollars in net profit to our bottom line this year.

Just for applying ourselves to the detailing? I'm not sure that I can put my finger on any other single reason.

We are not a new company; we have been in business for 53-plus years. We charge more money for these types of services than

anyone else in our market. We have been offering the five-year guaranteed pricing, full service and storage packages since 2004.

The level of service other than the detailing has been in place for longer than we have been guaranteeing prices. The staff is pretty much the same. We have not sold a significant amount more boats, and in my figuring I deducted the new-new boat storage folks. Our population hasn't grown, it has decreased, and if anything we have more storage competitors today than we did five years ago.

Net \$30,000-\$40,000 to a small dealership like mine is a pretty significant result.

service performed while they wait and allowing out-of-town customers the convenience of a single trip service opportunity. It begins the third Saturday of September and runs for eight consecutive Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. The number of services performed every year has grown in popularity (5 percent annually). We are estimating over 150 winterization service packages performed these eight Saturdays for 2011, with additional revenue generation of over \$30,000.

## Nancy Smith Colorado Boat Center Technician Hang Tags

### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

In 2010, Colorado Boat Center designed a Technician's Hang Tag to be used for completed service boats. The tag thanks the customer for their business and identifies the technician as a 5-Star Certified Technician who serviced the boat. The technician signs the hang tag and places it on the steering wheel. There were two objectives to implementing the identification. First, the technician is accepting ownership and responsibility for the service work done by signing his name to it. That ownership then instills our policy of "Do the Job Right the First Time." Second, technicians have little direct contact with the customers and very few opportunities to receive customer recognition for a job well done.



Second, technicians have little direct contact with the customers and very few opportunities to receive customer recognition for a job well done.

### Results:

The customer is pleasantly surprised to see the tag the next time they get into their boat. It provides them with peace of mind to see that the technician signed off on his work. For the technician, it is a way for them to display the pride they have in their work and it has increased their ability to receive "Red Carpet Service Awards" with the employee's customer satisfaction program.

from the 385 or so storage boats we housed down to around 350. Instead we experienced an increase to 399. It may not sound like a large jump but for a small company like mine it was pretty significant.

What is even more significant is what we are seeing for gains this fall.

As of this writing, we are 62 storage packages ahead of last year's numbers with more than half of the new customers mentioning the extreme detailing we perform. Most are neighbors of an existing storage customer.

### The Math:

Each of our storage customers, assuming they require a few repairs, represents \$1,500 on average in gross revenue each year, with the net margin on the largest portion of these services provided at around 70 percent give or take a couple of points.

Last fall we were expecting a decrease in 2010-2011 storage revenue. Instead we saw an increase. Just the gain in new storage alone accounted for about a \$12,000 increase in net profit. Though maintaining what we could have lost was of even higher value.

### Results:

This fall we are not talking about potential losses.

## Andy Manke Don's Marine Saturday Express Winterize

### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

This program started in fall 2008.

### Results:

Saturday Express Winterize offers customers the convenience of getting their boat winterization



## FINALIST

### Art Olson

#### Farm Island Repair and Marine Roll-In Aluminum Docks

#### When and How the Idea was Implemented:

In the fall of 2008, when the economy was going sour and we were watching fellow boat dealers close their doors, we knew we had to do business differently and swiftly. We did not want to have a big layoff, as all of our employees had been with us since we started the business and they all had families at home. We looked at where we could cut expenses, and we looked at areas of possible profitable growth. We determined that we needed to cut product lines that were no longer profitable – ATVs, snowmobile and lawn. The ATVs and lawn product lines helped us to maintain net sales but clogged us up during our busiest time of the marine season. We needed to find something that created work during our slow winter months, and at the same time we were looking for a medium value dock line.

In 2009, we came to the decision that our best area of growth potential was in the dock and lift area. We carry the top-of-the-line dock system with Floe Docks and Lifts, but not all of our customers wanted the best dock out there, and they would end up buying at our competitor. We determined there was a market for a middle-of-the-road dock system and that we could manufacture it. The first year in 2009, we built a sectional wood dock. The next season 2010, we built roll-in aluminum dock sections that came in 8', 12', 16' and 24' lengths.

We researched all the dock manufacturers and decided to build our dock system with some unique selling advantages, along with removable dock tops in Cedar, Titan or Aluminum.

We trained our existing mechanics on welding and the mechanics were instrumental in creating the roll-in dock product line, which had their buy in.

CEDAR			TITAN			ALUM					
4'x8'	\$1950	\$2000	\$2210	4'x8'	\$2291	\$2817	\$3002	4'x8'	\$2116	\$4126	\$4796
4'x12'	\$2000	\$2158	\$2318	4'x12'	\$2607	\$3187	\$3397	4'x12'	\$2316	\$3186	\$3486
4'x16'	\$2087	\$4137	\$4377	4'x16'	\$3126	\$4966	\$5246	4'x16'	\$4595	\$6165	\$6565
4'x24'	\$4116	\$1316	\$1836	4'x24'	\$4715	\$6345	\$6725	4'x24'	\$3678	\$7648	\$8028

Since we no longer sell ATVs, snowmobiles and lawn, our winters became very quiet. Now, our winter months (November through March) are busy as we manufacture 200-plus docks. This allows us to keep our mechanics busy without layoffs.

There was a minimal cash outlay to get into the manufacturing of docks – \$20,000 purchased welders and equipment.

#### Results:

In 2011, we increased our dock sales dramatically (100 percent) with a margin of 80 percent. We do not sell our docks at the wholesale level, nor do we have dealers.

We kept our mechanics on full time through the winter, and they enjoyed their change of pace with manufacturing docks. It is a product they created.

We have low marketing costs because the marine customer base already exists for us. We have created a sales brochure and our main brochure tells our dock story.

Built and sold over 200 docks in 2011.

### Chuck Guthrie

#### Lynnhaven Marine

#### Going After State Government / Colleges Boating Repair

#### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

As a business, we were not hearing from small state schools, colleges, Game and Inland Fisheries, the DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) and other government entities. We knew they had boats and motors because we see them all the time.

We came to find out they had developed new a state small business program, though it was not well advertised and it took a lot to become a “small business approved company.”

Funds are slow but a P.O. was always paid and their craft are high use. A lot of the work can be done in the winter when these boats and motors are not used as often.

#### Results:

We now perform repair and storage of rowing team boats as well as safety skiff and barges, and DEQ now brings their boats to us. We’ve seen increased parts sales, and we get our capabilities publicized to other groups in the state.

Other college teams are now looking at new motors, major rehabs, etc. We are now seeing potential for better contacts for boat sales (including two packages to Game and Inland Fisheries this year).

### Trevor Campbell

#### Seattle Boat Company

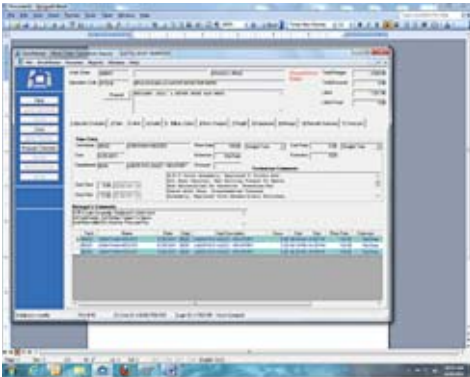
#### Real Time Service

#### When and How the Idea Was Implemented:

The idea has been a work in progress with the service teams over the last few years and was implemented through our MAP team.

#### Results:

Allows any employee in the company to view



the current work order and update a service customer of the current status of their vessel in the service departments.

**Chris Olsen**  
**Seattle Boat Company**  
**Safe and Efficient Boat Handling and Transport**

**When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

We modified a Ford F-650 with bunks to haul boats on the back as well as built a custom “lift



trailer” to easily load boats in seconds as opposed to blocks, slings and multiple moves. Our “lift trailer” is made from a bare boat trailer with no rollers or bunks and fabricated with a Sunstream boat lift without legs to lift the boat up into the

air for easy damage-free loading and unloading. Simply set the boat on, lower the lift and strap it down. We designed this setup five years ago and have since added two more lift trailers to our fleet with the purchase of a second F-650 in the near future.

**Results:**

We can load two boats and prep for transport to any of our locations in just a few minutes as opposed to 20 or 30 minutes per boat. There is less opportunity for yard damage, half the trips are required to move the same volume of boats and it gives us the resources to clear the yard more efficiently, with the ability to schedule more boats in for servicing. This setup ultimately generates more service revenue with less internal costs.

**Lauren Woodard-Splatt**  
**Woodard Marine**  
**Preferred Customer Service Maintenance Program**

**When and How the Idea Was Implemented:**

Woodard Marine launched a service promotion in which we send our current storage, dockage, new customers and frequent customers a preferred customer suggested service program every August.

The past few years have been very trying on all dealerships. The majority of the dealerships have had systems in place that have worked for many years that suddenly no longer are able to survive in the current times.

Woodard Marine noticed that our service department revenue has increased during these economic times and that our customers were putting their money into maintaining their current boat.

We store over 300 boats inside during our winter months, winterize more than 1,000 customers, have more than 120 mooring slips and sell more than 150 units a year. In focusing on these customers, we had more than 1,500 preferred service customers at our fingertips.

We then came up with a yearly promotion for these customers. We send out a customized preferred service customer program to all of these customers every August. This form has suggested service work that we recommend to keep their engines running smoothly and also of-

fers additional items that our customers can request (i.e. canvas, upholstery, fuel, etc.)

We have been doing this program for more than eight years. In 2010, Woodard Marine ran a report for all of our customers in our storage facility, mooring slips, new sales customers and frequent service customers. We then took this report and researched the customers’ boat and the service history on this boat. We exported this history into an Excel spreadsheet and itemized a manufacturer suggested maintenance schedule (yearly maintenance, three-year, five-year and seven-year maintenance schedules). We customize the suggested service yearly based on the customer’s history with our dealership. We then inserted this preferred service customer suggested service information into a customized checklist for customers to choose (we would highlight the suggested service for that year) what service they would like us to perform in the fall and winter months.

These letters are mailed and emailed out to our large customer base before winterization time at our dealership. We schedule the letter to be released at this time because we notice that our customers are more likely to do major maintenance in the off-season, so it does not impact their boating season.

**Results:**

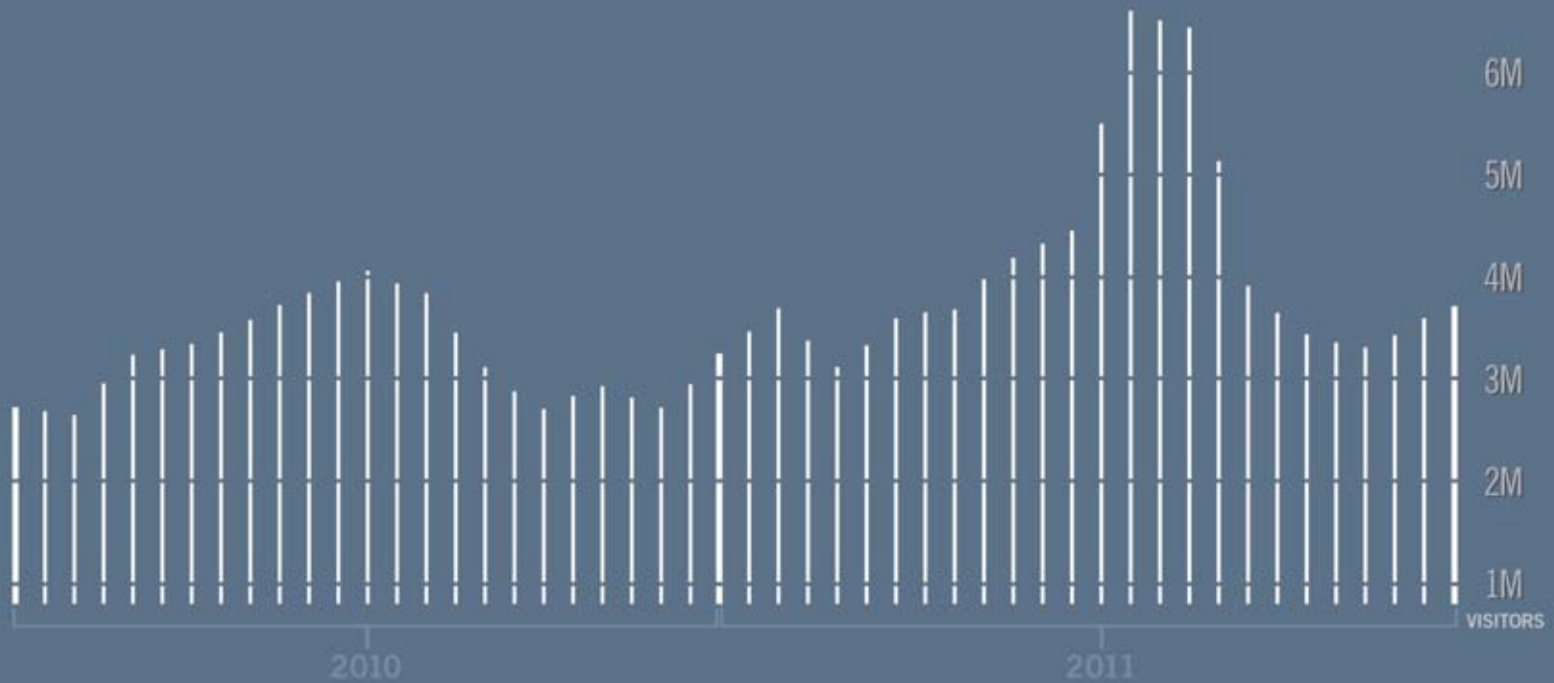
This promotion has been very rewarding both financially and helped in keeping our customers’ boats running like Swiss clocks.

Financially, we have a 90 percent acceptance rate in our storage customers for their preferred customer suggested service. This gives our service department work to complete during the winter months and brings revenue during the off-season.

To ensure our success rate, we also have our delivery and pickup driver bring a copy of the customer’s personalized preferred service schedule to the customer when they are picking up customers’ boats for storage. For those customers who do not respond to our letter, we make a personal call to sell the service over the phone.

We also feel that by starting this program with all of our new boat sales, it keeps the customers’ boats running for a long time, and our customers realize that we are not just selling boats, we are selling safety and confidence in their boat.

# ACCESS TO THE LARGEST MARINE NETWORK



**51**

MILLION UNIQUE SITE  
**VISITORS**

**8**

MILLION MOBILE  
**VISITORS**

**200**

YEARS OF MARINE  
**EXPERIENCE**

⋮  
**ARE YOU IN?**

Source: Adobe SiteCatalyst, 2011

**DOMINION**  
MARINE MEDIA