

TRENDS, PERSPECTIVE & ANALYSIS • JUNE 2020 • A FORMULA4 MEDIA PUBLICATION

# OUTDOOR INSIGHT<sup>®</sup>

**Navigating Today's Reality**

## **8 Great Ideas to Re-connect, Re-engage & Keep It Local**

**The Path Forward**



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### #THEBUZZ

**Royal Robbins** has hired Tom Janettas as Director of Sales and Anne Soderstrom as Director of Marketing. Janettas has more than 20 years of outdoor industry experience, most recently as Director of Sales – Specialty at The North Face. Soderstrom most recently held the title of Director of Brand Marketing at JanSport.

**Orvis**, the family-owned outdoor retailer, announced the appointment of Simon Perkins to president. Perkins has assumed full strategic and operational leadership of the company. He is the third generation of the Perkins family to lead Orvis since 1965. Outgoing president/CEO Bill McLaughlin, who has worked closely with Perkins on the Orvis executive team, will act as an advisor through the transition period.

**Deuter, LEKI and LOWA** have launched the **#VentureLocally** campaign, a 12-week long Instagram contest starting Monday, June 1, that encourages people to responsibly get back outdoors during this public health crisis. To participate, people should post a photo or video on Instagram that shows what getting outdoors in their own communities means to them. A winner will be chosen each week and will receive a prize package that includes gear from all three companies, including packs, poles and boots. Posts must be set to public with the tags @deuter\_usa, @lekiusa and @lowaboos, and hashtag #VentureLocally.

Outdoor equipment brand **Primus** has partnered with consumer goods rental platform **The Shed** to provide outdoor enthusiasts the ability to rent camp cooking equipment in the Denver and Richmond, VA metropolitan areas. Primus will offer five different kits to The Shed's users to rent for camping and outdoor cooking. "With the sharing economy booming and more people looking for new ways to experience the outdoors, the decision to partner with The Shed was clear," says Chris Clark, director of sales and marketing for Primus. "We want users that are interested in going camping or backpacking to have the opportunity to rent great cooking equipment. Our rental program provides users with access to the gear they need to get into the outdoors and The Shed is helping

### Trade Show News



The organization says it is continuously monitoring COVID-19 progression and will follow all recommended guidelines.

### 360 AC Rep Shows for August Still on Schedule

Three regional sales rep shows scheduled to be held this summer by 360 Adventure Collective (formerly EORA / NESR) have been canceled, but three other 360 AC Shows are still slated to take place.

The 2020 New England and Mid-Atlantic regional trade shows were canceled due to safety concerns related to coronavirus. The three cancelled regional trade shows are: the Mid-Atlantic Summer Expo (June 9-11 in Edison, NJ), the New England Summer Expo (June 16-19 in Manchester, NH) and the Mid-Atlantic Summer Market (July 8-9 in Ellicott, MD).

Three other 360 AC summer trade shows are still set to take place in August: The Southeast Summer Expo in Greenville, SC (moved from June to new dates on August 4-7); the Alabama Summer Expo in Birmingham, AL (moved from July to August 12-13); and the New England/Mid-Atlantic Paddle Sport show in Sturbridge, MA, scheduled for August 11-12.

The organization says it is continuously monitoring COVID-19 progression and will follow all recommended guidelines in place at the time of these shows by the CDC and state and local Health Departments. ●



The show team says it believes its model, which offers a hardgoods-focused, low cost, retailer-centric show with a demo opportunity, will be even more necessary in 2021.

### Organizers of The Big Gear Show Focus on 2021

In the wake of canceling its inaugural event due to the coronavirus, The Big Gear Show (BGS) is focusing on a 2021 launch instead.

BGS, a new outdoor industry trade show focused on hardgoods, with an emphasis on paddling, cycling, climbing, and camping gear, was set to take place July 22-25 in Salt Lake City, the former home of Outdoor Retailer. The Big Gear Show is now set to debut August 3-5, 2021 in Salt Lake City.

The show team says it believes its model, which offers a hardgoods-focused, low cost, retailer-centric show with a demo opportunity, will be even more necessary in 2021, as brands and manufacturers take a hard look at their marketing budgets and finances. "Now's definitely the time

to reconsider 'business as usual.' We hope that brands will continue welcoming an alternative show like ours that allows them to meet with their specialty customers and effectively demo and launch new products for a fraction of the cost of traditional shows," said show founder Sutton Bacon.

BGS Bike Show Director Lance Camisasca added, "The extra time gives us an opportunity to tailor the first-year event to our exhibitors' new realities. We had already decided to establish dynamic, cutting-edge features for the inaugural event, but now we'll be able to push that even farther and rethink every element of our show and optimize it for 2021's new landscape."

Registration for the 2021 event is expected to open by mid-summer. ●



The Connect Hub will bring together brands and specialty retailers for the spring 2021 buying process.

### Grassroots Offers Online Hub in Place of Connect

In place of this summer's Grassroots Connect Show, Grassroots Outdoor Alliance (GOA) has launched a free online platform — the Connect Hub — to bring together vendor brands and specialty retailers for the spring 2021 buying process. GOA will be welcoming approved retailers and

qualified brands from outside their traditional membership to access the hub. Find more information online at <https://connect.grassrootsoutdoors.com/connect-hub>.

To read our interview with Grassroots Outdoor Association president Rich Hill, turn to page 10. ●

## Industry Encourages Public to **#RecreateResponsibly**

A broad coalition of nonprofits, outdoor businesses and land managers have joined forces to form The Recreate Responsibly Coalition. Just prior to Memorial Day, the group launched the #RecreateResponsibly movement, just as public lands began to reopen and Americans slowly began venturing back to trails, beaches, and parks. The group's guidelines provide a framework for how the public can start to get outside safely this summer. Tips include:

### Know Before You Go

Check the status of the place you want to visit. If it is closed, don't go. If it's crowded, have a plan B.

### Plan Ahead

Prepare for facilities to be closed, pack lunch and bring essentials like hand sanitizer and a face covering.

### Stay Close to Home

This is not the time to travel long distances to recreate. Most places are only open for day use.

### Practice Physical Distancing

Adventure only with your immediate household. Be prepared to cover your nose and mouth and give others space. If you are sick, stay home.

### Play It Safe

Slow down and choose lower-risk activities to reduce your risk of injury. Search and rescue operations and health care resources are both strained.

### Leave No Trace

Respect public lands and communities and take all your garbage with you.

Social media resources are available online at [www.recreateresponsibly.org/](http://www.recreateresponsibly.org/)



## Masked Up

As the summer unfolds, masks are going to play a big role, and BOCO Gear is ready. Known for its endurance gear such as hats and accessories, BOCO Gear's offerings now includes masks, including custom, sublimated consumer masks for current retail customers and new businesses. Retailers interested should visit [bocogear.com](http://bocogear.com) or email [sales@bocogear.com](mailto:sales@bocogear.com) ●

us to accomplish that with their full-service, customer-centric model."

Traction brand **Kahtoola** held a virtual run in May which raised \$25,000 to benefit the **Havasupai Tribe's** COVID-19 relief fund. 258 participants from 23 states, along with 624 donors, helped Kahtoola surpass its original fundraising goal of \$10,000.

**Salomon** announced a partnership with the **Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC)** in which Salomon will donate a portion of sales to the cause to support the trail community. As part of the give-back program, Salomon will donate \$5 for every Odyssey hiking shoe sold from May 21, 2020 through August 31, 2020 to the CDTC. "The CDTC's goal of building a community of supporters who strive to protect the trail perfectly aligns with Salomon's approach to protecting the areas in which we recreate in order to enable people to play outside now and into the future," says Becky Marcelliano, outdoor marketing manager for Salomon in North America.

Italian footwear brand **AKU** has retained **The Uber Group** as its new sales rep agency to support sales throughout the southern states. Uber Group is a full-service sales agency that was started in 2006 by Steve Carvalho, Michel Lumpkin, and David Kramer. They have represented key brands, including Arc'teryx, Salomon, Smartwool, Eagle Creek, Nemo, Petzl and more. Uber Group will cover sales for AKU in Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida. ●



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After months indoors, consumers are eager to get outside. At the same time, outdoor companies are operating in a new normal. What do consumers want from brands and how are brands strategizing for 2020 and beyond?



Outdoor excursions with The North Face



**We are in the new normal.** And one thing is for sure, consumers are looking to spend some time outside. Biking and running are seeing an uptick, and the mental and physical benefits of being outside are being embraced more than ever. Brands are facing many challenges as the COVID-19 crisis continues to unfold. But one bright spot may be a new embracing of the outdoors by consumers. We asked brands how they see these elements impacting the way they will do business in the coming months. Here's what execs at six brands had to say:

## The North Face

Steve Lesnard, Global VP of Marketing & Product Creation

**What do you expect will be big sellers for you as consumers explore the outdoors this summer and fall?**

"We're seeing an uptick in outdoor camping gear for consumers excited to plan their next big adventure or just trying to get creative in the backyard."

**In this uncertain time, how are you marketing products to consumers? Have your investment priorities shifted?**

"We want to help communities by continuing to offer full pay and benefits to retail employees throughout store closures. TNF has also donated 60,000 gloves to health-care workers and supported The Renewal Workshop in offering medical gowns to healthcare workers."

**Are you creating smaller capsule collections to accommodate retailers' inventory challenges?**

"We've leaned on partners to create smaller capsule or specialty collections in line with our values. On Earth Day we announced the launch of our Remade collection, a collection of creatively repaired, one-of-a-kind upcycled styles, and an exciting t-shirt collaboration with a streetwear partner to directly benefit New York City COVID-19 relief efforts."

## Oboz

Rich Hohne, Director of Marketing

**What do you expect will be big sellers for you as consumers explore the outdoors this summer and fall?**

"Customers want function in their footwear, especially comfort, durability, and fit. Our Sawtooth II and Bridger styles fit right into this sweet spot, as does our new Arete."

**In this uncertain time, how are you marketing products to consumers? Have your investment priorities shifted?**

"Prior to the pandemic we had been working on increasing our catalog of online training tools for retailers,





Top: The Oboz design team's weekly socially-distanced get together.  
Below: Cotopaxi's #OneUtah tee



which we supplemented with additional training to fit customers by phone and video. We opened some videos to consumers to help them find the best fit from home.”

**Are you creating smaller capsule collections to accommodate retailers' inventory challenges?**

“With such a long lead time for footwear it’s challenging to change or reverse directions. We have a fairly lean SKU count to begin with. We are moving forward with new product introductions as they are evolutionary segments for Oboz — not revolutionary — and fit well where we see people heading with outdoor pursuits.”

## Cotopaxi

Annie Agle, Director of Brand and Impact

**What do you expect will be big sellers for you as consumers explore the outdoors this summer and fall?**

“We want our products to help people transition to out-your-front-door activities that help promote health and wellness. Providing masks made from remnant material from cancelled orders helps us decrease waste, while also allowing us to support factory sewers and provide customers with a necessary product.”

**In this uncertain time, how are you marketing products to consumers? Have your investment priorities shifted?**

“We’ve invested in public relations during this time. We’ve also collaborated with Brands x Better, which raised over \$3 million through collective corporate giving. Our first ever Quaranteam Questival — a virtual scavenger hunt- provided teams and families with a way to have fun and give back.”

**Are you creating smaller capsule collections to accommodate retailers' inventory challenges?**

“We launched a #OneUtah tee, whose proceeds went to supporting local COVID response. We’ve tried to be mindful of the financial strain on folks right now. We don’t want customers to feel badly about the things they don’t have and can’t afford.”

## Krimson Klover

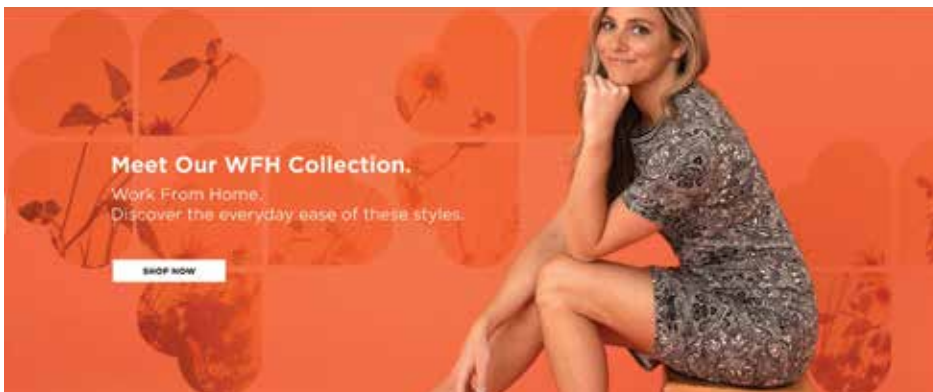
Marilyn Melis, Marketing Director

**In this uncertain time, how are you marketing products to consumers? Have your investment priorities shifted?**

“We have pivoted many items to be positioned as ‘local hike friendly’ versus ‘travel ready.’ We created a Work From Home collection of wrinkle free travel clothes. The Journey Jogger pant was initially designed as the



Top: Rock Climber Maiza Lima in Vasque's Breeze LT Low. Below: Krimson Klover Work From Home Collection.



perfect travel pant, but also works as a comfy and classy around the house item. We have positioned our skirts and dresses as 'Virtual Happy Hour Outfits.' Typically, we don't do a lot of discounts, but our weekly BOGO offerings have taken off."

**Are you creating smaller capsule collections to accommodate retailers' inventory challenges?**

"We recently did a co-promo with Kelty via Instagram that has done really well. The Together20 outdoor brand partnership campaign proved to be a success. Since we won't be meeting at tradeshow, we wanted to bring a more visual offering to the buyer's inbox with a virtual fashion show."

## Vasque

Joe Peters, Marketing Director

**What do you expect will be big sellers for you as consumers explore the outdoors this summer and fall?**

"This evolved approach to how consumers are recreating in a more localized fashion is ladder up to our products well. With our evolved brand position launching in June, which heavily leverages into the idea of 'Nearby Nature,' this will resonate with the collective condition many of us find ourselves within. We had already planned on launching a more comprehensive kids offering, so this is a nice opportunity for us to talk about our recent partnership with Children & Nature Network."

**In this uncertain time, how are you marketing products to consumers? Have your investment priorities shifted?**

"We're doubling-down on digital channels in driving brand/product awareness."

## Toad&Co

Sarah Matt, Head of Marketing

**What do you expect will be big sellers for you as consumers explore the outdoors this summer and fall?**

"The shift to spending more time outdoors — from backyard to backcountry — aligns with what Toad&Co has always stood for. Our sustainable, versatile, comfortable approach to one-wardrobe allows people to seamlessly transition through



their days, without an outfit change. People are looking to simplify and focus on what matters.”

**In this uncertain time, how are you marketing products to consumers? Have your and investment priorities shifted?**

“Customers come to us for relevant content, delivered in an optimistic way, so we are staying the course while remaining sensitive and sensible. Our revenue share programs support local retail and partners like Search Inc., which supports people with disabilities in the Chicago area.”

**Are you creating smaller capsule collections to accommodate retailers’ inventory challenges?**

“We have strategically approached our Spring ’21 collection to reduce style count, leverage key carry-over styles and introduce new styles that keep the collection feeling fresh.” ●



Toad&Co continues to focus on sustainable and versatile outdoor style.



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# One Day at a Time

Every individual and company has been challenged by the COVID-19 crisis in different ways. And clearly the past several weeks have been beyond challenging for outdoor retailers and brands from a business perspective. In late May, we caught up with Rich Hill, president of the Grassroots Outdoor Association to discuss some of the challenges of the past few months, and what the path forward might look like.

## Q&A: RICH HILL, PRESIDENT, GRASSROOTS OUTDOOR ASSOCIATION

By Cara Griffin

### What are the biggest challenges Grassroots retail members are struggling with at the moment?

“Honestly, it feels both necessary and redundant to acknowledge that many of us in the outdoor industry — and every other industry — are surrounded by drastic changes both personally and professionally, and that many are understandably taking things one day at a time.

For retailers, while logistical challenges of re-opening are front of mind right now (how to do it, when to do it, what considerations are necessary, etc.), it’s really the downturn in consumer demand that has us staying awake at night.

As a group, February was the last good month and was up around 4% across the group. March was a 40% year-to-year decline, but it wasn’t even across the group. Some retailers were down quite a bit more

than that, but a few were actually up due to selling some key categories like bikes, boats, and firearms. April numbers, due to stay-at-home orders nationwide, were down 70%.

A bright spot can certainly be seen in our most recent retailer survey, as our membership is confident those numbers will begin to improve pretty much immediately. The pace of that recovery is wildly uncertain though. Some retailers are anticipating a pretty sluggish recovery with a slow summer and fall, but others see it growing faster.”

### What do you think a positive path forward looks like for outdoor specialty retailers as we move ahead in the next few months?

“This is going to be remembered as a year of business survival, whether you’re a storeowner or a rep or a vendor with 25 years of experience. To get through it, the willingness and the ability to collaborate is really the key. We’ve all got to do what we

need to do for ourselves, but we also need to do what we can to help others around us.

What the positive path forward looks like to us is a scenario where retailers are collaborating with their vendor partners, holding honest and transparent conversations about their business realities and the importance of some key tools like discounts and dating on open invoices, as well as the need to hold MAP to maintain full margin. That scenario also includes vendors openly expressing their challenges and needs — the disruptions and delays and abundant inventory — and being heard by retailers.”

### How have outdoor retailers come together to help each other during this crisis?

“Our retailers have been eager to share and learn whenever possible during this crisis. Grassroots hosted our first COVID-related panel discussion during week one of the stay



## Grassroots Perspectives

is an editorial series in **Outdoor Insight** where we share Grassroots Outdoor Alliance retail members' stories, challenges and inspirations. Here, we interview GOA president Rich Hill.

at home orders — which seems like a million years ago — even though there wasn't any real information to share yet. The response to that first session, as well as all the subsequent learning sessions and shared best practices calls have been overwhelmingly positive.

Our retailer best practice calls have been a blend of retailer-only gatherings as well as hosted experts in certain fields. They've included various topics ranging from inventory management and landlord negotiations to things like re-opening, rehiring and re-engaging employees. For those who can't make the calls — for any reason — we record them, post them online, and make them available so that membership can listen when it works best for them."

### What type of things can vendors and retailers do to work together to get through this?

"Honestly, the best thing both sides of the sales table can do right now is make the effort to understand what the other person is going through. Retailers need to understand how brutal this spring has been for vendors, about the supply chain disruptions and shipping delays, the cancelled retail orders and the challenge of sitting on a ton of current inventory. And vendors need to understand that retailers will have low human capital, little time, and a lot to do in the next two months to keep the lights on and be a part of the recovery, so keeping things simple and flexible is the way to go.

Fortunately, we're already seeing these efforts start to create some interesting programs linking vendors and retailers. Initiated by Toad&Co, we are seeing more brands roll out direct to consumer revenue sharing programs, and we're all hopeful that these programs succeed."

### What kind of creative things have you seen retailers doing during this



**"This is going to be remembered as a year of business survival, whether you're a store owner or a rep or a vendor with 25 years of experience. To get through it, the willingness and the ability to collaborate is really the key."**

### time to help them stay connected to consumers?

"Obviously, this has been a couple months where digital marketing has really taken center stage. Some retailers already had a decent digital presence, and others scrambled to get one together.

What was really interesting is that those small retailers frequently did way more than just put 'things for sale online' — they figured out ways to use digital tools to convey the personality of their stores and connect with their customers. Things like streaming trunk shows, trivia nights, and virtual travel nights became really popular with some of our retailers. In some cases those initiatives resulted in sales, but most of them would agree that the most important part was their

ability to stay connected to their customers.

One of the other most impressive things we've seen is the remarkable community efforts by some specialty retailers. For example, the owners of Roads Rivers and Trails in Milton, Ohio, founded a downtown business association and giving website to help their neighbors. Their view is that they're only as strong as the businesses around them, so by helping their neighbors they can also help themselves."

### With this summer's Grassroots Connect trade show cancelled, what is GOA doing in its place? And what are your thoughts on how the Spring 2021 buying season will unfold?

"As much as we would love to wave a magic wand and guarantee a normal, predictable, and consistent one-size-fits-all solution for our retailers and vendor partners in Spring 2021, the reality is that depending on where you are — both in your business and in the country — there are many variables in play that are keeping that dream from becoming a reality.

Beginning in June, we [launched] an open online platform — the Connect Hub. This Grassroots tool will be free, flexible, and supportive of all levels of businesses from the most digitally advanced to those just getting started with online tools. It will gather all the key information from brands in a single place, and provide a straightforward opportunity to navigate Spring 21 product resources.

This approach is not a regimented and heavily scheduled 'virtual trade show' as some may have initially expected. It's our belief that with so much uncertainty still on the horizon, a limited and time-constrained approach would potentially exclude many brands and retailers. We also believe that open accessibility for the most possible vendors and retailers is of utmost importance and we are designing the tool with that key in mind." ●



# THE PATH FORWARD

Outdoor specialty retailers weigh in on how they survived the past few months—and what the future holds.

BY CARA GRIFFIN AND BOB MCGEE

## Listen, Learn, Have No Fear

Darren Bush, Owner, Rutabaga Paddlesports

The Wisconsin-based paddlesports specialist was open in a limited capacity by May, and throughout the pandemic, the retailer has seen strong e-com sales. Bush believes excelling in customer service is



Rutabaga Paddlesports

one key that will help stores thrive going forward.

**The New Normal:** “Our website is doing very well, already passing last year’s sales a few weeks ago,” Bush told us in late May. “We are offering curbside pickup, showings by appointment, test paddles by appointment, etc. It has been working great, and our customers are quite accommodating.”

**Virtual Offerings:** “We’ve used Facetime, Google Duo and Zoom to interact virtually. We’ve had customers buy boats, paddles, PFDs, car racks, and a ton of other gear via video conferencing. We can either have them ready to pick up, or if it’s within 40 or 50 miles, we can just deliver it. Frankly, when I do them, it’s another chance to talk to the customer casually, and Midwesterners like their driveway conversations. Plus a box store CEO ain’t deliverin’ nothin’ to no one.”

**Wish List:** “A vaccine would calm a lot of fears, but that product cycle is slow moving. What needs to happen for all our businesses to be successful is for people to purchase good gear from specialty shops and stay offline. Amazon doesn’t sponsor your kid’s soccer team. Moosejaw doesn’t donate to the food pantry. Backcountry.com doesn’t hold

fundraisers for the neighborhood library. REI.com doesn’t entertain your toddler while you try on a PFD. Few of these entities support the community in a significant way.”

**A Tip for Specialty Retailers:** Bush is blunt. “Specialty retailers need to up their game, too,” he said. “As much as I dislike box stores, they often give better service than we do in terms of logistics. It doesn’t matter how smart your salesperson is if the thing they’re smart about isn’t in stock or worse, it’s in stock but you can’t find it. We need to be professional in terms of business operations as well as in product knowledge and passion.”

**Bright Spots:** “I think the benefit of this pandemic is that it has taught us the power of community and how much we need each other,” said Bush. “That’s a beautiful thing. Our specialty retailers in town are doing okay because people want to support them. Right after we had to cancel Canoecon, our big consumer show, we asked for help and our customers bought five figures of gift cards to help with cash flow. It was quite moving.

The good news is that we as an industry have what people need to settle their nerves and heal their souls.”

**Have No Fear:** “Don’t make decisions based on fear; fear is paralyzing,” advised Bush. “Get good data, look for ways to innovate, and try new things. If they fail, you’ve learned something. We tried a few things that just didn’t take off, but we found out quickly. Getting through this mess requires quick and decisive failures so you don’t waste time on strategies that don’t work. Growth like this is an iterative process. You just keep going until you stop learning things. For me, that’ll be when I’m dead.” ●

## WE SPOKE WITH 8 (+1) RETAILERS FOR THIS ARTICLE

Appalachian Outfitters  
Eagle Eye Outfitters  
Next Adventure  
Outdoor Gear Exchange  
Pack Rat Outdoor Center  
River Sports Outfitters  
Rutabaga Paddlesports  
The Trail Head  
Wild Iris Mountain Sports





Pack Rat Outdoor Center

### Reasons to Believe

**Chally Sims, Manager, Pack Rat Outdoor Center, Fayetteville, AR**

Over the past few months during the COVID pandemic, the shop was able to stay open and has also worked to stay connected to customers through social media and email. As traffic in the shop slowed, the staff worked on internal upgrades and customer service offerings.

**Website Upgrades:** “We used the time when sales were down to get our web store up and running,” said Sims. “This project has been on the back burner for a while, so we took the time to dive in, stay focused and get several staff members involved to get the web store up and running with a large portion of our inventory available for on line purchasing.”

**Upgrading Customer Service:** “Customers have utilized curbside pick up as well as ‘hold for store pick up’ and shipping,” said Sims. “Customers have been considerate in wearing masks, allowing a safe distance during their visit to our store and understanding the temporary changes we’ve made to manage the COVID-19 situation.”

**Wish List:** “I hope that everyone will continue to take precautions with COVID-19 in mind so that we don’t have another spike in cases,” said Sims. “I hope that our customers will return to our stores either in person or through our web store to shop locally for the things they need for their next adventure. Many of our vendors are pulling business and margins away from us by discounting products that are in-season styles and colors; this is doing more harm than good for all of us. If everyone will hold price, we can

all benefit from full margin.”

**Bright Spots:** “I’ve heard a lot of talk of supporting local businesses and I believe that people want to give that support whenever they can,” said Sims. “Some do despite vendor web site discounts, but many do not because it’s tough to pay more for an item if funds are tight.” ●

### Trying it All

**Todd Frank, Owner, The Trail Head, Trail Head T9 and Trail Head River Sports, Missoula MT**

During the initial shock of the COVID crisis, Frank says he purposely did not do a big campaign to ask folks to do gift cards while his business was closed as he “felt everyone was trying to find a way to deal with the situation and it did not feel right to join in with a hand out.” The store began doing curbside pick up before fully opening eventually. He anticipates that many customer service changes he has put in place will remain going forward. He sees the business as changed forever, however, and says many brands will be “culled” from his offerings.

**Key to Success:** “I came in every day for seven weeks and answered the phone and emails, and simply tried to help folks however I could,” said Frank. “It gave me a chance to talk with vendors and sales managers about the balance of Spring 2020 and Fall 2020.”

**The New Normal:** “We have tried it all — curbside, private shopping and early hours,” said Frank. “Taking about one third of the racks off the floor and opening up the area around the cash wraps makes the store much nicer. Over time we all tend to keep packing more inventory into the same space and I think culling the herd of vendors will be a benefit. We are of course making those decisions based on how vendors are managing their business at this point.”

**Wish List:** “It has changed our business forever, no question about that,” said Frank. “My real hope is the people and brands on both sides of us will still see value in what we do and be willing to come into a physical space to support us. Brands that are aggressive in how they manage DTC and consumers who are only looking at price will likely fall off for us. We are NOT going to pivot and try to be an online player. That ship left port. We will offer most products online with our new website



The Trail Head

but it is more of an attempt to give our existing customers a chance to support us digitally as well.”

**Future Strategy:** “We are going to move away from much of the apparel business that has been very important here for over 40 years,” said Frank, noting that he has seen his success selling apparel undercut by brands discounting it in DTC offerings. Frank said that he thinks “easy to sell items” like basic camping gear often have better price integrity online and that consumers therefore buy where they are comfortable shopping and “do not make those decisions based on huge discounts online to entice them to buy a more risky product.”

**Boating Is Strong:** “Our boating store is doing well,” said Frank. “Customers want to see it before buying it. And these are items that consumer see as a safe socially distant way to recreate. I hear the same from bike shop owners. It is a nice trend.” ●

### Be the Face of Your Own Company

**Mark Anderson, Owner, Eagle Eye Outfitters, Dothan, AL**

Alabama’s Eagle Eye Outfitters, which opened back up on May 1 at a 50 percent occupancy rate, stayed active throughout the COVID crisis on social media, with owners Susan and Mark Anderson doing weekly video updates. And a strong “shop local” movement has emerged in the shop’s community.

**The New Normal:** “We have increased the number of Facebook Lives that we do throughout the week to engage our customers with brands and products that we carry in the store. We’ve been very surprised at the number of people that are out shopping and their excitement to get back to



participating in normal life experiences that they missed doing for six weeks.”

**Leaning in on Digital:** “We made the decision to drive people to our website as soon as our business was shut down and it paid off during the month of April while we were closed,” said Anderson. “In the past, we had only offered a limited amount of brands and products on our website but we immediately started adding everything we offered in store on our website to ensure that our customers would have as close to the same shopping experience on our website as they do in store. We added private FaceTime shopping experiences and curbside pick up. Some of these things have not sustained at the same level since we have opened back up but all of them will probably be permanent additions to our service delivery model going forward.”

**Wish List:** “We are encouraged by what has happened thus far and see some light at the end of the tunnel. Our customers have been very supportive of us re-opening and seem eager to get back to their regular shopping habits. There are two things that we are watching very closely. First, we need our brand partners to maintain price integrity for the rest of the year and resist doing heavy discounts within their DTC channels. Secondly, we need our community to fully commit to shopping safely for the foreseeable future. A secondary COVID-19 outbreak out this fall that hits right at Thanksgiving and Christmas would be a worst case scenario for everyone in retail.”

**Bright Spots:** “From the very start of the pandemic, our community has rallied around the small



Eagle Eye Outfitters

businesses in our community. People were very upset about the Government’s ability to choose who they deemed essential and non-essential. They saw the hypocrisy of the Wal-Mart, Target, and others being allowed to stay open while the governments shut down all the local stores that actually could have provided a safer shopping experience for them through this crisis. There is a VERY strong movement in our community to shop local more consistently so that our neighbors businesses can make it. In addition, we have seen an uptick in the sales of products for outdoor activities. Brands like ENO and Yeti have really picked up again after being down for a few seasons.”

**A Message to Brands:** “Every independent retailer needs their brand partners to act like partners and not competitors. We realize they are in a difficult situation as well, but we do not need them to start making decisions that hinder our ability to make it or that adversely affect our partnership with them after the crisis has passed. Independent retailers have long memories. We will make a list of the brands that acted like adversaries throughout this and we will re-evaluate those relationships on the other side of COVID-19.”

**Tips for Retailers:** “I would strongly suggest that every owner of an independent specialty outdoor shop fully commit to being the face of their company for the foreseeable future. The more your community understands that there is a local person that owns your shop, the more likely they will be to shop there in the coming months... Show your humanity and invite them into your lives so that they will know that your relationship with them is built off way more than how much money they spend with you.” ●

### Focusing on the Silver Lining

**Mike Donahue, Co-owner, Outdoor Gear Exchange, Burlington, VT**

It was the tail end of ski season when Vermont’s Outdoor Gear Exchange closed its doors due to COVID restrictions, and in the ensuing weeks consumer demand began to shift towards bikes, another key category for the retailer. “We were closed to customers for two months,” said Donahue. “So we’ve had experience ramping up slowly and developing procedures.”

**Bright Spots:** “I think this summer people are

going to look for quality time to spend with their family and trusted friends,” said Donahue. “And the outdoors is going to be a compelling destination. Normally people are torn between all the opportunities — whether to go on vacation and see a new city or go to a cultural event or a concert — none of those seem like the smartest choices this summer.

We’ve seen strong demand on the bike side already. We have seen both bike sales and our bike service business be quite strong.”

**The New Normal:** “It has been a challenging time,” said Donahue. “We have used email and social media to stay current with people and keep spirits up. Initially we had an outpouring of support with people buying discounted gift cards we sold. We began scheduling appointments for bike service and bike purchases. We will continue offering appointments as an option for the foreseeable future. People may find it more convenient in addition to it being more safe. In the store, we restructured our front entryway and cashwrap to enable more distancing and we added curbside pickup in a separate alcove. I think that will continue on in some shape or form for another year or more.

And we are using Zoom, Facebook Messenger, texting — anything to make it easy for customers to connect with us to get what they are looking for.”

**Bright Spots:** “I wouldn’t have wished this on anyone but there are some silver linings,” said Donahue. “The time we were shut and we had to figure out how to respond — that will make us stronger going forward.

This summer, it seems likely there will be more family trips — hiking, camping, exploring the outdoors. It is low cost and there is a ‘dispersed’ way to do it. There are going to be people excited to use the outdoors as their vacation place.” ●

### A Sustainable Model

**Deek Heykamp, Co-owner, Next Adventure, Portland, OR**

While Next Adventure closed its physical locations during the early stages of the pandemic, the retailer is fortunate to have already had a robust e-com business in place, meaning that more than 35 (out of 100+) employees were kept onboard throughout a months long retail shutdown. “We



had built a sustainable model and knew that if the website did the same business as the year previous, we would be sustained,” explained Heykamp. In fact, Next Adventure’s web business on many days during the pandemic was two and three times more successful versus year-over-year comparisons.

**Strategy:** “We were able to secure a PPP loan and it emboldened us to use the time to work on things that made sense,” said Heykamp. “We worked on building our infrastructure and things that could help us come out on the other side much stronger. We spent time on training and education and things we could do remotely. We had staff in the stores answering phones and doing curbside pickups and appointments with COVID protocols.”

**The New Normal:** Next Adventure ships all across the country from its distribution center. “And to ease the pain for local people, we began offering free delivery in Oregon and Washington,” said

Heykamp. “In the Portland metro area, we did free personal delivery for kayaks. That was a big hit.”

Going forward, Next Adventure will continue to do curbside pickup and schedule appointments, and the store may also extend its hours. “With limited people in the store, why not extend hours to get more customers in per day and give more staff hours with less people in the store?”

**Category Growth:** “We noticed a specific growth in paddlesports during the shutdown — kayaking canoeing, stand up paddle boarding. I’d speculate that it’s something people realized they could do safely with social distancing as part of it. Our web traffic for paddling increased nationwide.”

**Communication Is Key:** “One of the things I felt early on is that in times of crisis what scares people is uncertainty,” said Heykamp. “The number one thing we needed to do was communicate with staff, vendors, with our community. We have had



Outdoor Gear Exchange

HR calls every week with our furloughed/laid off employees. Likewise, our accounting department is being honest with vendors. Be transparent and overcommunicate. It has served us quite well.” ●

An advertisement for Sorbothane Insoles. The background is light blue. In the center is a large, detailed image of a grey insole with a green heel pad and a yellow arch support. To the left of this are three smaller insoles in blue, orange, and grey. The text 'WE ARE HERE FOR YOU' is in a red speech bubble in the top left. The brand name 'Sorbothane' is in large, bold, black letters with a registered trademark symbol, and 'INSOLES' is in smaller black letters below it. The slogan 'Let's Get Up &amp; Running Strong!' is in bold black letters. On the right, three orange banners with white text read '90 DAYS TO PAY', 'FREE SHIPPING', and 'DISCOUNT PRICING'. Below these is an American flag icon and the text 'MADE IN USA KENT, OHIO'. At the bottom right, the text 'Call Us To Order - Or For Any Other Request!' is in orange, followed by the phone number '800-838-3906' and the website 'insoles-sorbothane.com' in black.



## Turning Back the Clock

**Ed McAlister, Founder/Owner, River Sports Outfitters, Knoxville, TN**

The Knoxville-based retailer, which also operates several boat rental locations across the region, was able to stay open during the pandemic and saw strong demand from its consumers, hungry to explore the outdoors. **Bright Spots:** “I feel very blessed, selling bikes and things like that, that we were allowed to stay open,” said McAlister. “We’ve had a very good demand for the cycling portion of the business for transportation, and the boating portion [too]. And people want trail shoes or hiking boots, tents, backpacks or whatever. It seems like everyone was wanting to get away and do something and were tired of being cooped up.”

**Bikes & Boats:** “Some [bikes] already sold out for the year,” said McAlister. “Boats are the same way. But we’re fortunate that we can go pick-up our boats as most of the major boat companies are within a three-hour radius of Knoxville. We run trips two or three times a week. Bikes are dribbling in, but we certainly aren’t getting what we need.”

**What’s Next:** “I see slowing demand for some products that have been in high demand, such as boats and bikes, but I still see demand for getting outside,” said McAlister. “We’ve been here 37 years. This goes back to 20 years ago when we were sort of the only store of this kind and people would come by to get outdoor advice, information and products to get outside. It seems as if someone



River Sports Outfitters

turned the clock back. I’m hoping that we are providing something to those people who may have gotten out of the habit of going outside and doing these things. Maybe they’re now having a second thought—‘Wow, this is fun! Let’s continue doing it when this [pandemic] is over.’ That’s the positive side to me.”

**Inventory Strategy:** “I think there’s going to be a lot of issues on the soft side of the business,” said McAlister. “A lot of discounting... that’s [something] everyone is going to have to be careful with. There’s a lot of surplus product right now... We’re going to try and be a little extra careful with what we bring in [for Fall] and not be caught without product. But I also don’t want to be caught with a lot of surplus products. It’s a tightrope.” ●

## Keeping the Community Spirit

**Amy Skinner, Owner, Wild Iris Mountain Sports, Lander, WY**

Wyoming’s Wild Iris Mountain Sports has remained open over the past few months, just in more restricted ways, said Skinner.

**The New Normal:** “In mid-March, we locked our front doors, but were able to keep staff working as we adapted to delivery of orders, curbside service and started upping our game online,” said Skinner. “Mid-April, we started making appointments for in-store shopping and mid-May we opened our doors to five customers at a time, with six-foot distancing and masks being worn, while we continued appointments before and after hours.”

**In the Community:** “At the heart of Wild Iris is community service, so we adapted our usual Spring Fling fundraiser onto an online effort to raise money for Lander Community Foundation’s COVID-19 Relief Fund,” said Skinner. “We were able to come close to our normal fundraising level and were delighted, but not surprised, that our regulars were engaged with our effort.”

Skinner said that another trend in Lander has been businesses collaborating. “For instance, the Lander Running Club raised money for The Middle Fork restaurant and Wild Iris by engaging their members in online challenges,” she said. “Elemental Fitness and Performance partnered with Wild Iris in a social media challenge and shout out for our 30th anniversary. The International Climbers Festival, Lander Bar and Gannett Grill



Next Adventure

and Wild Iris collaborated to present an online Q&A with a showing of the documentary, ‘Wind and Rattlesnakes.’ We have seen strong efforts of this type from lots of groups in town.”

**Wish List:** “Our biggest week of the year, International Climbers Festival which is usually mid-July, has been postponed until mid-August with plenty of uncertainty surrounding whether it will happen at all this year,” said Skinner. “I hope that we will come to a safe and reasonable way to celebrate ICF, either in person, online or a combination. And I have the same hopes as we continue to celebrate Wild Iris’ 30th anniversary.”

**Bright Spots:** “There has been huge support for local businesses and I believe that support will continue,” said Skinner. “Our customer wants to see Wild Iris continue and we are feeling the love! If Memorial Day weekend is any indication, we will see outdoor recreation continue to be an essential and vital part of our community. Customers have been thoughtful and very willing to follow our guidelines as we work toward the new normal.” ●

## Play the Hand You Are Dealt

**Mike Leffler, owner, Appalachian Outfitters, Peninsula, OH**

During the time his store was shutdown, Leffler and staff sent “occasional email updates” to consumers, but not too many, he said, as people in his hard hit state of Ohio were more focused on jobs and putting food on the table. He is very realistic about the tough road ahead.

**The New Normal:** “We added curbside pickups and



an appointment calendar,” said Leffler. Prior to May 2nd, the store was not allowed to do appointments or curbside. “Going forward, we will probably keep the online appointment calendar for items that require more time and expertise, such as pack fittings, kayak consultations, footwear fittings. Things that take time and that customers want to schedule in advance.”

**What Retailers Need:** Leffler’s top wish? “Vendor’s need to stop selling against their wholesale specialty retailers,” he said. “We brought in all our Spring 2020 inventory just before the state mandated shutdown. Vendors then started selling direct at deep discounts while our inventory sat in the dark. There is no way we should be invoiced for the pre-shutdown value of our merchandise when the vendors themselves obviously feel their products are worth 25 percent to 50 percent less as demonstrated by their own DTC web sites.”

**Category Challenges:** “There is a movement away from clothing and into hardgoods,” said Leffler. “We don’t anticipate much travel until maybe late third quarter but more likely in the second quarter of 2021 if a vaccine or some other treatment is available. Local running and day hiking covers a small portion of what we sell. A pair of shoes, or a pair of running socks, or a day pack, don’t offset the losses from not selling trekking packs, \$300 backpacking boots, tents, stoves, etc.”

**Wish List:** “We have to manage through this with the facts and data as they are,” said Leffler. “If we choose to ignore the virus and pretend life is like it was last year, we are looking at potentially being closed down even longer if it takes off again. No retailer wants to miss the holiday season but we could put ourselves in that position. We are planning on being down 40 percent to 60 percent this fall and are adjusting accordingly. We don’t



Wild Iris Mountain Sports

WANT that outcome, but we must play the hand we’re dealt. Wishing things were different is not a strategy.” ●

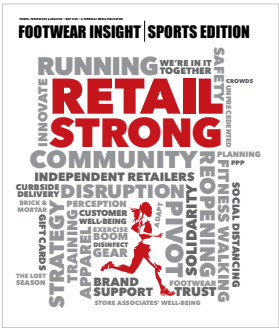
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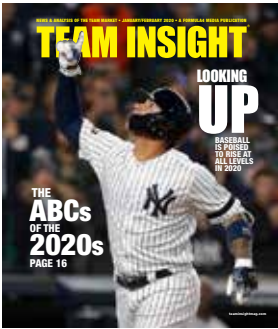
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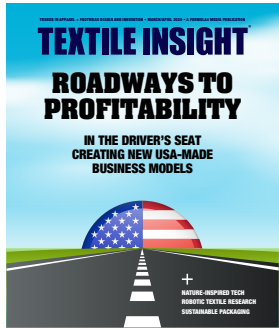
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# Good news for retailers to lean on in the months ahead... **8 GREAT IDEAS**

**BY BOB MCGEE**

## **1. Fuel the Momentum for Outdoor Adventure. Take Advantage of Category Trends.**

After months of nesting and staying at home due to COVID-19 in the Lost Spring of 2020, Americans' have a growing appetite for getting outside and "doing something." Anything. After all, there are only so many banana breads that can be baked. Four activities seeing renewed interest are: family bicycling, fishing, yard games and camping. With some outdoor specialty retailers reporting some bicycle out-of-stocks for the season by mid-May, two corporate beneficiaries of rising participation in these outdoor endeavors have been Dorel Industries, parent of bike brands Schwinn and

Cannondale, and Camping World. Findings from the 2020 North American Camping Report from Kampgrounds of America, issued in late April, suggest the ongoing pandemic combined with general caution and travel limitations is driving the interest. While RV travel is predicted to be a "particularly viable vacation option" in 2020, refuge in the great outdoors will be the backyard for some. For the two weeks ended May 2, according to NPD Group retail data, sales of key camping basics were up substantially. These increases ranged from a 119-percent increase for camp sets to a 30 percent year-over-year improvement for recreational tents.

## **2. Expand Your Community Beyond Core Clientele.**

Consumers have a new thirst for outdoor fitness and activities amid the COVID-19 crisis and stay-at-home orders. Ed McAlister, founder of River Sport Outfitters in Knoxville, TN says he and his outdoor specialty peers need to take advantage of this trend with a steady stream of friendly advice, product knowledge and conversation.

"It seems as if someone turned the clock back," contends McAlister, who started his shop 37 years ago. "I'm sort of hoping that we are providing something to those people who may have gotten out of the habit and doing these things. Maybe they're now having a second thought—'Wow, this is fun! Let's continue doing it when this is over.'"

## **3. Think Outside the Box.**

A recent white paper from Highlinebeta.com urges retailers "to rethink their customers' buyer journey and think harder about strategic partnerships" that will enable them to rapidly expand their digital, social and marketplace footprints in order to stay competitive and flexible in challenging times.

"Retailers in the Customer Experience category will compete by paying extremely close attention to consumer behavior shifts as well as technology trends and tools... Many of these shifts are likely to become permanent and will need to be more tightly integrated into the existing experiences retailers already offer... These retailers may find it necessary to instill and protect organizational growth mindset and culture and focus innovation efforts not on technology but on their customers' needs and wants, building an ecosystem of tools around jobs the consumers hire them for..." Highlinebeta writes.

Take your retail experience to where consumers are — Amazon, Facebook, Instagram and others.

## **4. Embrace Changed Consumer Behaviors and Adapt.**

Go forward expectations in brick-and-mortar will be empathy for employees and customers alike combined with technology to make interaction and transactions easier and without possible health risks. Consumers' enthusiasm for in-store experiences has shifted to a desire for speed,



convenience, and transparency.

In a recent OIA webinar, Chris Hogue, head of strategy and product for LiveArea, a global commerce experience agency noted that “safety” is important for employees and customers — and retailers should not overlook the importance of customers “feeling” safe. This “emotional safety” can be as important as physical safety. Retailers should make sure all employees can communicate safety procedures to customers.

Curbside delivery and contact-less purchases, neither of which had huge traction pre-COVID-19, are unlikely to dissipate. Retailers should embrace this new normal. Five key areas for retailers of any size to meet customer preferences in this new normal are: inventory accuracy, curbside delivery, an online order fulfillment area, in-store mobile point-of-sale and the capability for an in-store customer account.

“The premium on being genuine has gone through the roof,” suggests Chris Baldwin, executive chairman of BJ’s Wholesale Club, speaking on a recent National Retail Federation webinar. “Six months ago, how many retailers would have thought safety would be of paramount importance. How do we make people feel safe? It’s easier said than done but it’s the primary marketing message of the future.”

### **5. Don’t Be Afraid to Partner With Other Entities To Grow Your Brand & Reach.**

Given the current climate, retailers of all shapes and sizes can’t afford to ignore partnerships that can help your brand and products reach consumers. An example from the big-box side: In mid-April, Designer Brands, parent of the DSW footwear and accessory chain, struck a partnership with Midwest supermarket operator Hy-Vee. Why? To meet consumers where they are. The two initially created an online experience of DSW’s offerings on Hy-Vee’s website that offered buy-online, pick-up in the grocery store capabilities. That was to be followed by a pilot program offering family footwear styles in a pallet format at 120 Hy-Vee locations followed by the launch of several DSW shop-in-shops in select Hy-Vee locations over time.

In another collaborative example: Outside Cleveland in Rocky River, OH, Cleveland Outpost is sharing retail space with Nalu Stand Up Paddle

& Surf. The idea behind the new outdoor specialty shop focused on used outdoor gear and rentals is to create an outdoor-oriented community by getting locals to try new activities with expertise and affordable equipment.

Meanwhile, co-op giant REI has teamed with

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**The role of stores has changed. A store must do more than just sell items. Customers have brands selling direct to them and they have e-com options. So why do they need stores? The store is an experience.**

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West Elm to create a curated assortment of chairs, side tables, blankets, pillows and kitchenware for online customers of either retailer.

### **6. Remember Resilience**

Navigating uncharted waters in an overall stressed retail climate can be scary, but only those that can adapt their roadmap and go-forward strategies to changing realities will have the opportunity to survive and thrive.

“I am truly worried about the 60 percent of the companies in retail that barely break even during normal times. I would place much of the independent retailers in that category,” Carl Boutet, chief strategist for Studio Rx, recently said. “The good news is that this is also the category where the greatest stories of resilience and transformations will come to life.”

Consider the journey of For Now, a three-year old Boston Seaport District specialty shop that showcases varied, smaller maker brands and relies

largely on the lunchtime crowd and tourists passing by for the majority of its business. When For Now was forced to close due to the pandemic, it ramped up its digital presence to reach customers. The owners are planning online broadcasts to shoppers from inside the store to discuss what’s in stock, tell stories behind each brand being carried and answer questions. The program will continue after the store re-opens for business.

### **7. Embrace E-Com**

Like it or not, this is no longer just for “the big guys,” although businesses of all sizes could probably learn a lesson or two from them.

Kohl’s has worked tirelessly to create an omnichannel experience for its customers as it has expanded its loyal customer base to 65 million. In the first quarter, the retailer experienced 24 percent digital sales growth, improving throughout the period despite shuttered stores. Shoe Carnival, meanwhile, realized triple-digit, year-over-year growth in ecommerce sales during the first quarter, which it attributed to recent technology investments. The chain’s ecommerce sales rose more than 500 percent for the four weeks ended May 16.

In U.S. retail overall, e-com penetration for an 8-week period in April and May grew to 27% of overall retail sales, up from 16% — a dramatic acceleration. Likewise, “click and collect” is now a must, with a 208% increase y-o-y in April for BOPIS orders among U.S. retailers.

### **8. Reward Loyalty**

The role of stores has changed. A store must do more than just sell items. Customers have brands selling direct to them and they have e-com options galore. So why do consumers need brick-and-mortar stores? One key reason: The store is an experience. This is good news for outdoor shops who excel in offering experiences.

What else can retailers do to retain and attract customers? Focus on loyalty and on incentivizing people to come to the store. Program perks, such as concierge service, premium appointments, discounts, personalized communications or other offerings, can enhance the loyalty programs that many specialty retailers already have in place. Re-examining loyalty program perks is a project worth focusing on. ●

## THE SURVEY:

# Consumers Are Ready to Shop & Get Outside



Taking part in outdoor activities is top-of-mind for consumers this summer. And purchasing outdoor gear, footwear and apparel is on the agenda for a large percentage of consumers according to exclusive research conducted for *Outdoor Insight* by MESH01.

The survey, conducted by MESH01, included 355 respondents, men and women, with an average age of 35 years old.

In our survey of 355 active Americans, 36 percent reported that they plan to increase their shopping behavior when it comes to outdoor products. And more than 40 percent said they would venture out to a brick-

and-mortar store to shop for these products within one week of stay-at-home restrictions being lifted. Eighty-six percent of respondents said they plan to take part in hiking excursions this summer, with 69 percent reporting that they planned on camping.

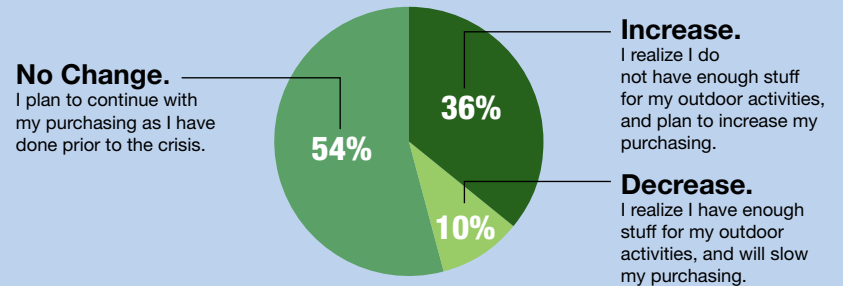
Fifty-two percent said their outdoor participation would stay the same this summer, with 33 percent saying it would increase. ■

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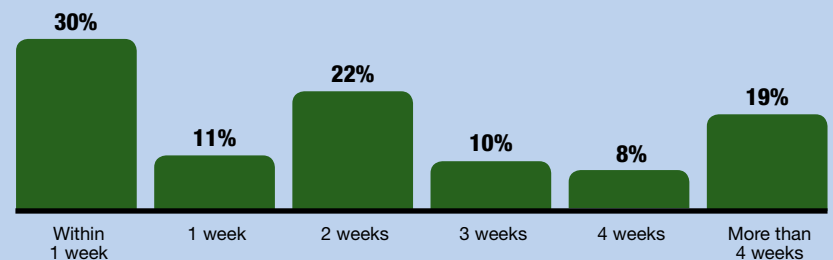
SEIZE THE TREND!

*Trend Insight Consumer* is a feature within *Outdoor Insight* that delivers research conducted on the MESH01 Platform. MESH01 collects data from a select panel of sports enthusiasts. For information on the Mesh1 Platform, contact Brian Bednarek at 603-766-0957 or brian.bednarek@mesh01.com. For more information on *Trend Insight Consumer* and how your company can participate, contact Jeff Nott at 516-305-4711 or jnott@formula4media.com.

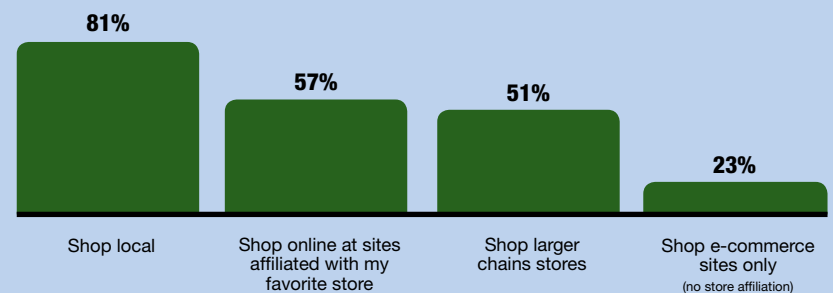
Now that the local/state stay-at-home restrictions are being lifted, do you see any changes in your outdoor apparel, footwear or gear shopping behaviors?



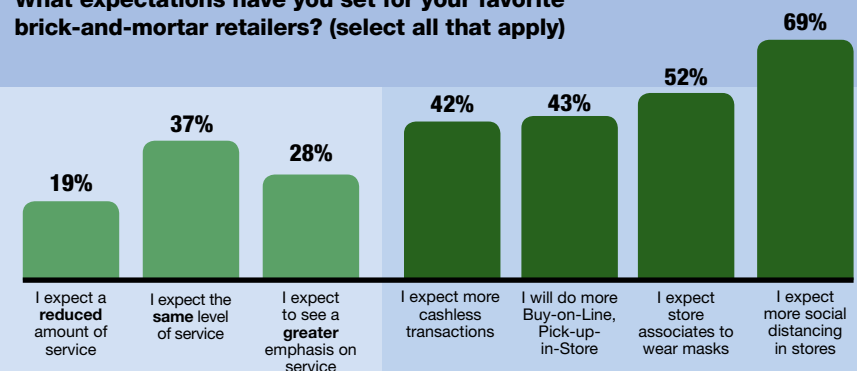
When the local/state stay-at home restrictions are lifted, how soon do you plan to venture out to your favorite stores for your outdoor apparel, footwear and gear?



Will you plan to shop local stores in your community or larger chains stores? (select all that apply)



What expectations have you set for your favorite brick-and-mortar retailers? (select all that apply)



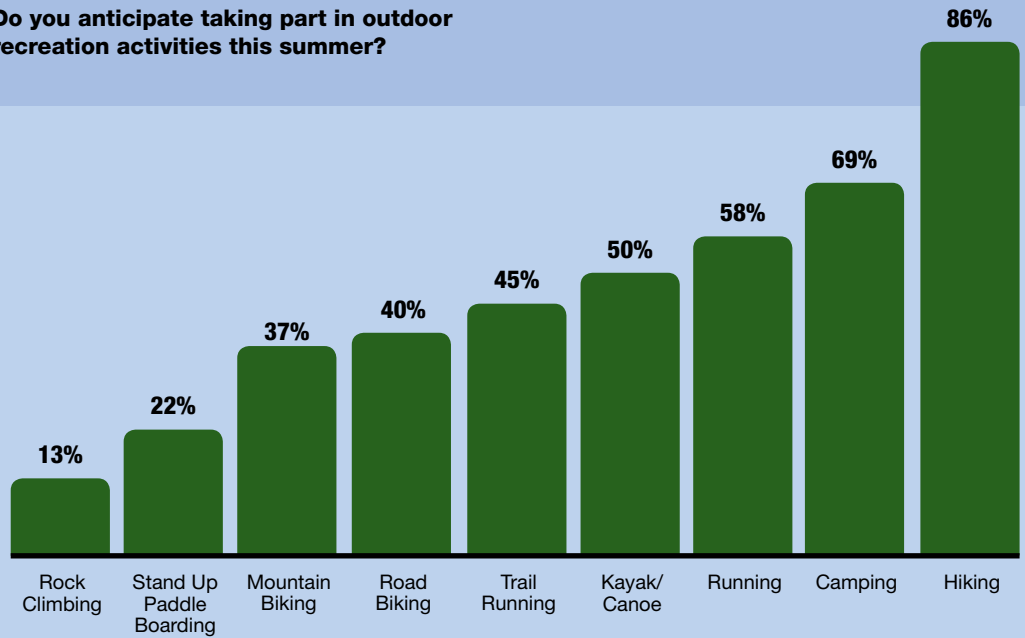


**Which of the below offerings at a brick-and-mortar store would make you more likely to shop there?**

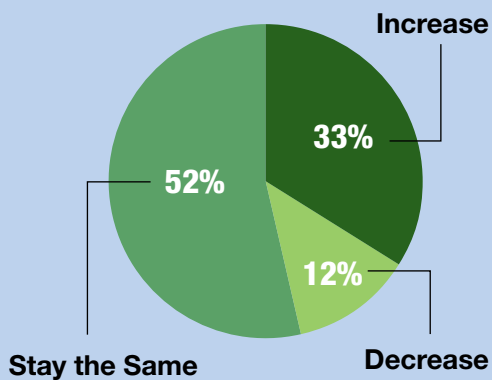
1 being the most important

- #1 Curbside Pick-up
- #2 Limiting the amount of customers in store at any one time
- #3 Local Delivery
- #4 Details of the cleaning process the stores undertake
- #5 I plan to shop as I have always done
- #6 Individual appointment setting
- #7 Virtual fitting or consultation

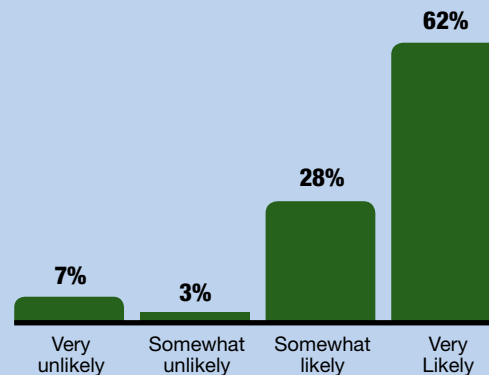
**Do you anticipate taking part in outdoor recreation activities this summer?**



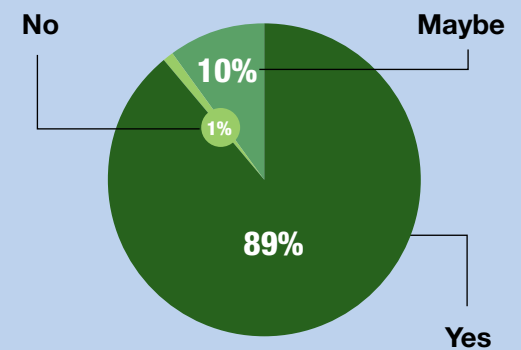
**Will your participation in those outdoor activities this summer change because of the health crisis?**



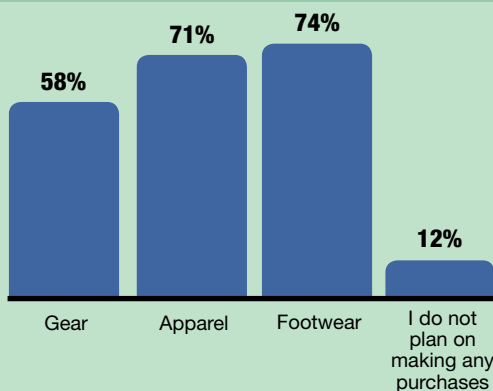
**When planning a vacation or leisure time in the coming months, how likely will you be to choose an outdoor activity as a form of leisure/vacation?**



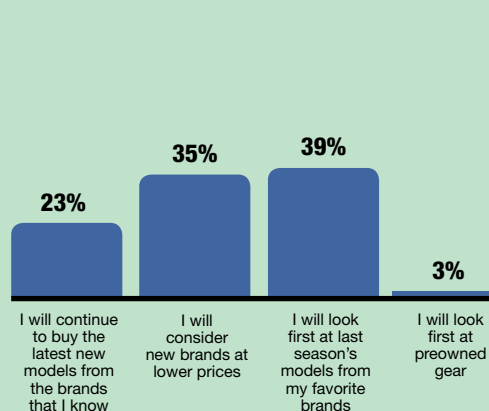
**If local hiking trails in your area are open, would you feel safe with social distancing rules to visit?**



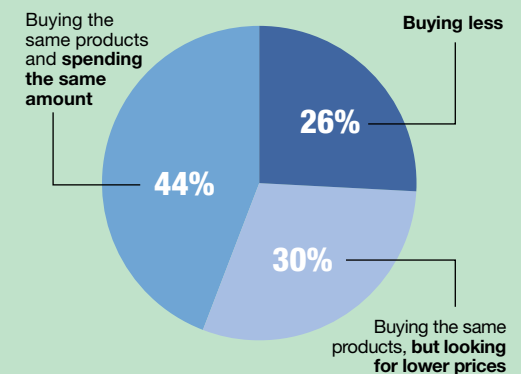
**Do you plan to purchase outdoor footwear, apparel or gear for summer activities? (select all that apply)**



**When searching for new outdoor footwear, apparel or gear, how will pricing affect your purchases?**



**Will you be adjusting your spending for new outdoor products in response to the health crisis?**



## As the economy opens up, what are the most important factors that would compel you to visit a brick-and-mortar store to shop rather than shop online for your outdoor apparel, footwear and gear?

### SELECTED COMMENTS

"Staff and customers being required to wear masks. Personal service helps tremendously." **Female 34**

"I don't see the need to do anything different from any other time. The flu will always be around. All you can do is do your part in staying away when sick, etc." **Male 49**

"I don't feel comfortable shopping in-store right now. I prefer online delivery." **Female 32**

"Limit on amount of people in store, having hand sanitizer, sanitizer wipes, and masks available." **Female 47**

"The stores need to sanitize and clean the stores more thoroughly than ever before. They need to sanitize the cash register areas more." **Female 29**

"Hiking/outdoor adventure items should be tried on for comfort and fit. It is very hard to virtually buy a quality hiking shoe if I am unsure of how the brand fits, do I want a high top or low top, does the arch support fit my high arches, it's the shoe heavy or light, etc. Same goes for back packs and other gear. It needs to be tried and felt to make a good decision." **Female 39**

"Great deals, plenty of stocked items." **Female 42**

"I like to try things on and inspect them for quality or flaws." **Male 39**

"No social distancing, no masks, no hysteria." **Female 60**

"I like going to the store to try clothes on before I buy it. I would like to support the stores so they can stay in business." **Female 46**

"If everyone is wearing masks." **Female 29**

"Buy online pickup in store. Limit people in store. The store needs to be roomy and not crammed with products everywhere." **Female 37**

"Perhaps a re-opening sale. With RSVP email." **Male 28**

"Seeing them taking social distancing seriously." **Female 58**

"The biggest compelling factor would be to support local businesses." **Male 43**

"I need to be able to try on and feel the shoes. I cannot shop for running shoes online. I have to put on both shoes and walk with them to see how my feet feel and move in them." **Female 38**

"Sales! I love sales and coupons. You can get me in a store for that stuff." **Female 36**

"Social distance, clean stores, nice customer service." **Female 42**

"Knowing my safety is at the heart of day to day operations." **Female 30**

"Sales, incentives to buy from them, coupons and cheaper prices than buying online through places like Amazon. Right now I'm all about saving money due to budget constraints from lack of income due to COVID-19." **Female 41**

"This will be hard. If I know what I am going into the store for, easy in and out, I'll shop in the store, but I would prefer it to get shipped to me." **Female 31**

"If I knew they were clean and only allowing [a few] people in the store at a time." **Female 30**

"If I need something, I will have no problem going to any store regardless of a lack of safety measures being taken." **Male 35**

"I would prefer shopping online right now because of the age of my children. They are 1 and 2 ½, and they like to touch too many things for me to comfortable taking them to a store." **Female 34**

The process of buying from a brick-and-mortar store has to remain simple. The pandemic creates complexity in every facet of life now. I want shopping at a store to be simple. Clean, masked employees, easy to understand rules of engagement, and simplistic merchandising so I can find what I need. Curbside is fine." **Male 35**

"Strictly enforcing everyone in store wear masks and social distance. Hand sanitizing stations throughout the store. Senior shopping hours. No pets in store, strictly enforced." **Female 47**

"Honestly, lower prices would bring me in even more than safety restrictions." **Male 32**

"The top reason to shop brick-and-mortar over online stores is to try gear on before purchasing." **Male 29**

"I am not that concerned with the virus, but I would like to see social distancing and care taken with cleaning and disinfecting." **Male 35**

"I would prefer to shop as I have before the pandemic. I will not be wearing a mask." **Male 29**

"Convenience. When I shop in store I likely need it now and do not want to wait for it to be shipped." **Female 32**

"In-person service such as a consultation on running shoe choice where I get to try the shoes on and go for a quick run outside, or get to test ride a bike." **Male 36**

"That the store takes local, state and federal guidelines seriously and enforces mask policies within the stores. I'll walk out of a store if not everyone has on a mask — employees and patrons, as well." **Male 48**

"In store deals. I personally like to shop in-person due to knowing exactly how it looks and fits for my family. However, online purchasing is almost always a better deal. I'd love to see appropriate sales, especially for loyal customers." **Female 27**

"Selection and prices. Plus, I still highly value the in-store, personal experience, especially with athletic gear." **Male 41**

"For things that require fitting or that I don't have enough lead time to purchase online, I would be willing to go to a brick-and-mortar shop." **Female 36**

"Free beer." **Male 42**

"Curbside, appointment pickup only. I get this for small shops that I support. That is why I support them. The ones I select usually exceed my expectations. Large brick-and-mortars usually are inconsistent in service, quality and customer focus." **Male 52**

"I want to support local business owners as they're trying to climb out of the hole that's been made." **Male 30**

"Safety is first and foremost. Supporting stores and brands that supported their employees during the shutdown would also be a high priority." **Male 35**

"In-store sales, explicit social distancing protocols, masks being worn, and a clean environment." **Male 34**

"Making it feel like before it happened." **Female 58**

"Customer service. I want to discuss products and see what they recommend." **Male 29**

"How staff are treated, hands down." **Female 31**

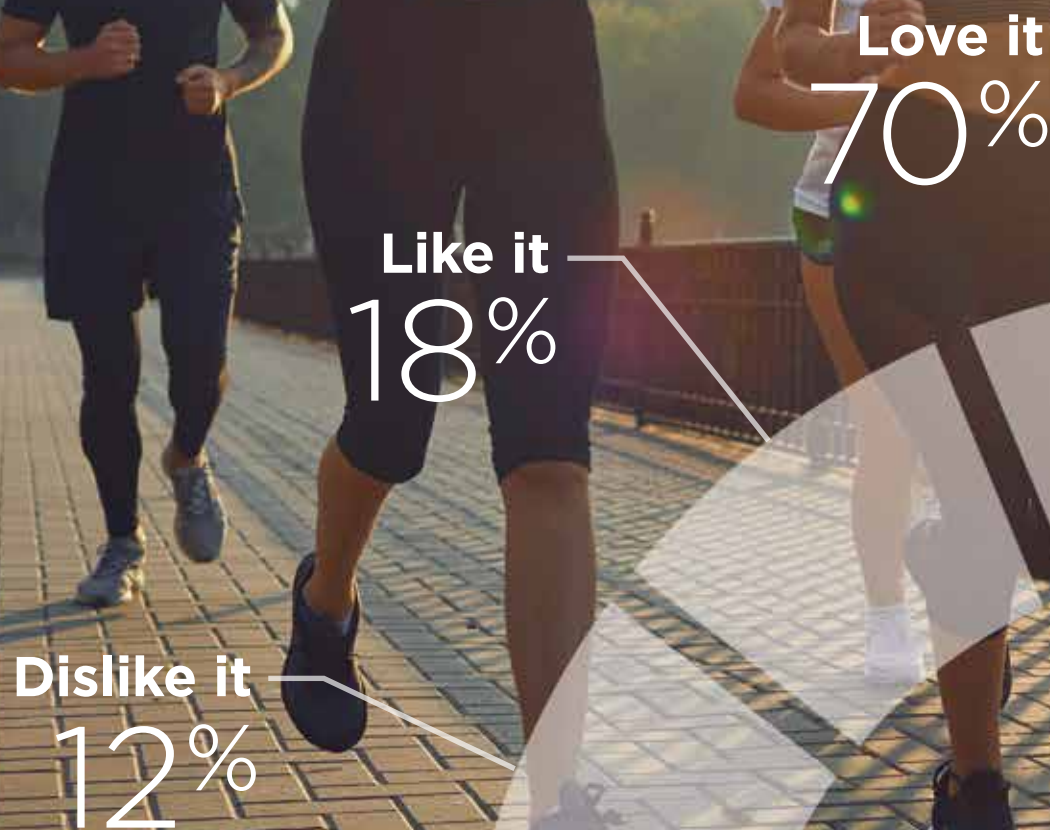
"Routine cleaning in place and no one coughing." **Female 30**

"Hours and ability to actually get in without a massive line." **Male 51**



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