

MARKETING TO WOMEN

By Shari LeGale



Women enjoy shooting, whether it is at a Ladies' Day in 1915 or on today's ranges.

Six Ways To Increase Your Sales

In August, the Pahquioque Rod & Gun Club in Danbury, Conn., held a Ladies' Day trap shoot, with 111 ladies attending the event. That may not seem like many, except the year was 1915.

Since then, women's involvement in the shooting sports has continued to grow. In 2008, The National Sporting Goods Association reported almost six million women participate in the shooting sports today. The National Research Opinion Center and the FBI state 17 million women own some type of firearm.

But that growth is not just in the shooting sports. It's also in purchasing power. Women account for \$7 trillion in consumer and business spending, according to Fara Warner's book, *The Power of the Purse*, and they have more than \$13 trillion in personal wealth. When it comes to buying strength, women are no longer a niche market.

Dealers, are you attracting some of those dollars? Perhaps you feel you've marketed

to women without getting anywhere? A few changes in your approach, and carrying the right products and offering the right services, will bring in women customers.

The good news is that men and women want the same thing. Both want quality equipment that fits their physical ability and skill level. When selling to a woman, focus on her abilities, not her deficits. Make it a positive experience for her. These tips can get you started.

1. Reach out to the shooting sports woman.

There are numerous organizations that promote women in the shooting sports. Find a local chapter and become a support center for those women by partnering your store with them. Becoming an Outdoors Woman (www.uwsp.edu/cnr/bow), NRA's Women on Target (www.nrahq.org/women/wot.asp) and National Wild Turkey Federation's Women in the Outdoors ([\[theoutdoors.org\]\(http://theoutdoors.org\)\) are just a few organizations with local chapters that provide easy access for women into the shooting sports.](http://www.womenin-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Work with a local range and hold an introductory event. NSSF's First Shots (www.firstshots.org) program is specifically designed to build customer traffic at shooting ranges. That traffic will transfer to your store when those participants need equipment.

2. Develop women who shoot.

Don't just sit and wait for the women's market to come to you — create your own market and your own customers by inviting women in and introducing them to the shooting sports.

A fly fishing shop in Colorado was looking for new ways to increase foot traffic and increase sales. They focused on women. Twice a month, they held women's fly fishing introductory classes, free of charge. By starting the class at 7 p.m.



Women want the same quality products you offer men, but there are some products that are better suited for women. Learn what they are and offer them in your store.

— which gave women enough time to get home from work, tend to the needs of their family and get to the store — they found an average of eight to 12 women showed up. The class was simple, explaining exactly what fly fishing was, how to get involved, what products were available and where to go. These classes lasted an hour — and made the little fly-fishing shop the biggest support center for women in the area, increasing their customer base and bottom line.

3. Become women friendly.

It's all about customer service. Train your staff on how to accommodate the female customer.

A woman who makes her first foray into a gun shop may feel intimidated, and a warm hello can work wonders. A typical human defense mechanism is to notice things that reinforce what she already believes. If a woman is ignored or treated in a patronizing manner, she may believe she has found the "truth" she knew all along. Men may consider the use of familiar terms such as "honey," "dear" or "little lady" as friendly, but women usually feel patronized by these names, particularly in business situations.

Keep in mind that women may not be as familiar with shooting products as you think. Don't make assumptions. Make sure it's what she's looking for and offer options. Talk to women in ways that build confidence in their ability and build their confidence in you.

4. Make your store inviting.

Women begin forming an impression from the minute they drive into your park-

ing lot. Ask yourself, and be honest, "Does a woman want to come to my store?" But just don't ask yourself, ask a woman, too. Whether it's a female employee, a regular female customer, a spouse or a friend, ask them to take a hard look at your store, from parking lot to bathroom.

Look at your store like it was the first time, through the eyes of a new customer. Assess your surroundings. Yes, you know where everything is, but will the first-time customer? Take tips from other retailers. You may not have as much inventory or space, but utilize the space much like they do.

The first thing you notice when you walk into a large retailer is whether the shop is clean, with floors that are swept and unmarked walls, and whether or not the store is well lit. Brightness is an inexpensive, easy way to give your store a facelift and make it more appealing to women.

5. Create a women-specific area.

This may sound cumbersome, but it's really very simple. In your store, create an area women can feel comfortable in. It doesn't have to be very big; it can simply be a small corner or sitting area, with a few women-specific magazines from the orga-

nizations mentioned earlier and a shelf of women's products. If a woman walks into your store with a husband or friend and she isn't involved in the shooting sports, she'll have a place to spend her time. There she feels comfortable, finds that women are very much a part of the shooting sports and are welcome, plus there are numerous avenues of introduction for her. A future customer!

Bob Holmes, owner of Whistling Pines Gun Club, designed and built his facility to be attractive to women, and makes an added effort to market to them.

"I looked at the market and saw a void. There was no place for women to go and relax, feel comfortable and chew the fat about shooting and the outdoors. Men have always had their places, but not the women," Holmes said.

Thanks to Holmes' efforts, 25 percent of his business is women.

6. Carry women's products.

Women may want the same thing as men when it comes to quality equipment, but they also still want products that are women specific. There are a lot of women's products available. It's just a matter of finding and having knowledge of them.

There are firearms specifically de-



Is your store really women friendly? Visit stores that do attract women and study displays, lighting and how customers are treated.

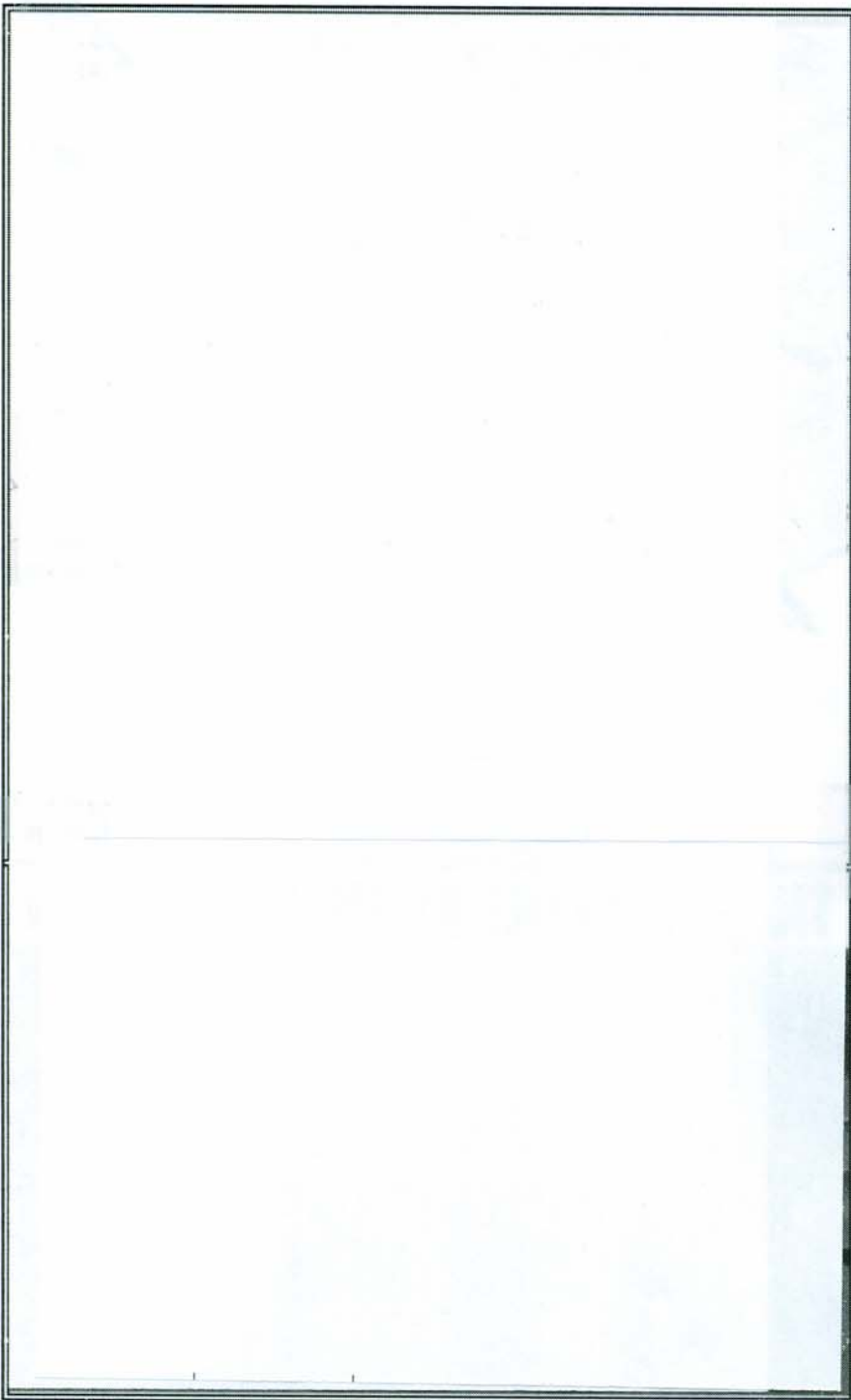
signed for women and some come in a variety of colors.

"Sales on our Derringer FS Series were good, but when we added the colored finish options of red, blue, purple and pink, sales skyrocketed. Women are snatching them up. Retailers tell us they can't keep them in stock," said Bill Gentry, president of Cobra Firearms.

Ten-X Ammunition is manufacturing a .38 Special cartridge with a pink bullet.

"Let's face it: Women like to be women," said Brigitta Pumerantz, owner of Ten-X. "We don't want to be just like the guys — we want to show that special flair only women have, and pink is the most obvious way to do it. Seeing the success of the colored guns, the natural progression was to create a colored bullet."

But when it comes to clothes, pink isn't the color. Próis, SHE Outdoor Apparel and Foxy Huntress all make functional cloth-



ing designed for women in camouflage, safari, field and fashion. All three say business is booming.

"The growth is with women. Men have their toys and clothes, and now women want their own," said Shelah Zmigrosky, owner of Foxy Huntress.

Brenda Potts, director of marketing for SHE Outdoor Apparel, agrees.

"Our business just keeps growing. Women want and need clothes that fit. We don't just 'shrink it and pink it;' we design for women, and our pro staff field-tests it before it ever gets to the consumer," Potts said.

“Men and women want the same thing — quality equipment that fits their physical ability and skill level.”

Bottom line: If it's not possible to carry the inventory, have catalogs available for women to look through and order from. Keep your staff updated on products, organizations and events available to women, which lets women know your store is willing to take the extra step on their behalf.

These are small improvements and gestures with minimal investment that will reap huge returns. Women tend to be very loyal customers.

It's an easy concept with women. Provide them with products they need, a comfortable setting and good service — and your store will be their first choice.

And remember, if a woman is treated well, she'll tell one friend, but if she's treated badly, she'll tell 10. ©

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