

RV EXECUTIVE TODAY

JUNE 2026

ANNUAL BENCHMARKING ISSUE

2026 FINANCIAL BENCHMARKS

June
Is Great
Outdoors
Month

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Campers Still Want to Get Outdoors – but Economic Pressures Persist

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Why Cross Training Fixed Operations Staff Is Becoming Essential for Today's RV Dealerships

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ACQUIRED BY
BISH'S
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CLOSINGS
IN 2025



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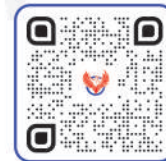
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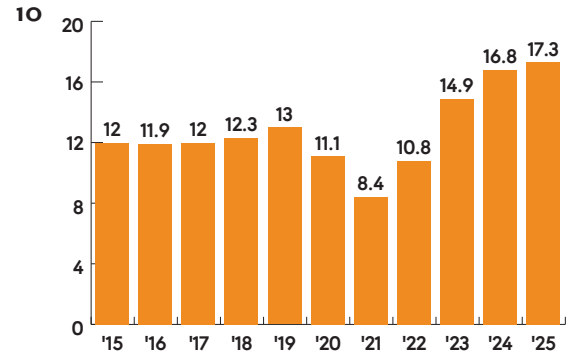
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June 2026

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Federal Advocacy Priorities During Great Outdoors Month

By Phil Ingrassia, CAE, RVDA president

June is Great Outdoors Month, a celebration of outdoor recreation and the national parks, forests, and other public lands that make it possible. While it's a moment to appreciate the places we love, it's also an important reminder that access, affordability, and infrastructure don't happen by accident. They require strong advocacy.

For RVDA, RVIA, and the entire outdoor recreation industry, this month is an ideal time to spotlight the policies that directly impact RV owners, dealers, manufacturers, and the millions of Americans who rely on public lands. Two priorities stand out this year.

Making RV Travel More Affordable: "No Tax on RV Loans" Bill Introduced

To help keep RV travel within reach for more families, Congressman Rudy Yakym (R-Ind.) and Congresswoman Dina Titus (D-Nev.) have introduced H.R. 8672, legislation that would eliminate taxes on RV consumer loans. The bill extends the Working Families Tax Cut's no tax provision for auto loans to include trailers, campers, and all motorhomes.

The measure has strong support from RVDA and RVIA and is a key focus of Advocacy Day during RVs Move America Week.

Rep. Yakym emphasized the bill's impact on working families: "For millions of American families, an RV is how they take a summer road trip with the kids, see the country, or enjoy retirement on the open road. It's a big investment, and it should be treated like one."

Rep. Titus added that RVs remain one of the best ways to experience America's national parks and natural landscapes, providing another reason to reduce barriers to ownership.

America the Beautiful Act and the Legacy Restoration Fund

Affordability is only one side of the equation. Access for RV travelers and other visitors depends on safe, well-maintained public lands.

The Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF), created in 2020 through the Great American Outdoors

Act, has become one of the most effective tools for repairing long neglected infrastructure across national parks and other public lands. Aging campgrounds, outdated water systems, rough roads, and closed trails have long limited access for millions of visitors.

I hope you'll take a moment this summer to discuss these issues with your elected officials and candidates.

In just a few years, the LRF has funded hundreds of projects nationwide, improving safety, expanding access, and protecting the natural and historic resources that define the American outdoor experience. According to the National Park Service, LRF investments have generated an estimated \$8 billion in economic value, proving that maintaining public lands pays off.

But the work is far from done. The federal maintenance backlog still exceeds \$40 billion, much of it tied to infrastructure built in the 1950s and 1960s, according to the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable. Without reauthorization, the LRF will go dormant, and repair needs will continue to grow, which has the potential to limit access for RV travelers and all outdoor enthusiasts. That's why the bipartisan America the Beautiful Act (S. 1547) is so critical. The bill would:

- ◆ Reauthorize the LRF for eight years, through 2033
- ◆ Increase annual funding from \$1.9 billion to \$2 billion
- ◆ Prioritize projects with at least a 15 percent stakeholder match to encourage public private partnerships

For the RV industry, reauthorizing the LRF means ensuring that the parks, campgrounds, and public lands our customers rely on remain safe, accessible, and ready for the next generation of travelers.

As the country heads toward the midterm elections, RVDA will keep you updated on the progress of these key advocacy efforts. I hope you'll take a moment this summer to discuss these issues with your elected officials and candidates. They need to hear directly from the dealers who keep this industry strong and if you need more information, just send a note to info@rvda.org. Thanks for your support. ■

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Turning Benchmarks into Real Team Progress

By Bob Been, RVDA chairman

If you're leading an RV dealership today, you already know how easy it is to get buried in numbers. Units, gross, close rates, RO averages – it's all there. But the real question isn't do you have benchmarks? It's are they actually helping your people get better?

I've found that the best-performing dealerships don't treat benchmarks as scorekeeping tools. They treat them as conversation starters.

Let me explain. When you sit down with a salesperson, a technician, or your F&I manager, the goal isn't to review numbers for the sake of it. It's to answer a simple question: "Where are you today, and what's the next step forward?" That's where benchmarks come in.

But they only work when they're clear and relevant. A salesperson should know exactly what success looks like. Maybe it's 10 units a month, \$3,000 average gross, and a 20 percent close rate. A tech should understand expectations around billed hours and comeback rates. Everyone should know what "good" looks like in their role, without guessing.

And just as important, they should know what great looks like. One thing I've seen make a big difference is using tiers instead of a single target. Instead of saying, "You need to sell 10 units," give them a ladder:

- ▶ **6 units: we need improvement**
- ▶ **10 units: solid performance**
- ▶ **15+: top performer**

Now the conversation changes. People don't just aim to "hit the number," they start asking how to move up. Here's where many dealerships miss an opportunity: they wait too long to look at performance. If you're only talking about results at the end of the month, you're coaching after the fact. By then, it's too late to fix anything.

The better approach is to look weekly, even daily if you can. Not just results, but activity:

- ▶ **How many calls are being made?**
- ▶ **How many appointments are getting set?**
- ▶ **How many are actually showing up?**

Those are the early signals. When you track them, you can step in sooner and help someone course-correct before they fall behind.

And that brings me to something I think is critical: Benchmarks shouldn't just measure results. They should measure behaviors. Units sold matter, no question. But units are the outcome of everything that happens before the sale – calls,



Benchmarks help your people understand where they stand, what's expected, and what's possible next.

follow-up, engagement, consistency. When someone is underperforming, the number itself doesn't fix the problem. The behavior does.

So instead of saying: "Your numbers are low," You can say: "Let's look at your appointments and follow-up, because that's where we can improve." That's a very different conversation.

Visibility also plays a bigger role than most people realize. When your team can see where they stand; whether it's a leaderboard, a weekly scorecard, or even a simple dashboard; you create accountability without saying a word.

Top performers stay motivated. Others see the gap and know exactly what they need to work on. It turns performance into something tangible, not abstract.

Of course, none of this sticks without alignment. If your benchmarks say one thing but your pay plan rewards something else, your team will follow the money every time. When benchmarks and compensation are aligned – tiers, bonuses, incentives – you create momentum. People see a direct connection between effort, performance, and income.

That's when engagement really starts to rise. One last thought, because it matters in our business: The RV industry isn't static. Seasonality, inventory swings, and market conditions all play a role. Your benchmarks need to adjust with reality. If they're too aggressive, people disengage. Too easy, and performance stalls. The goal is to keep them challenging but attainable.

At the end of the day, benchmarks aren't about spreadsheets or dashboards. They're about clarity. They help your people understand where they stand, what's expected, and what's possible next. And when used the right way, they give you something even more valuable: a consistent, productive way to coach, develop, and grow your team. And that's what moves a dealership forward. ■

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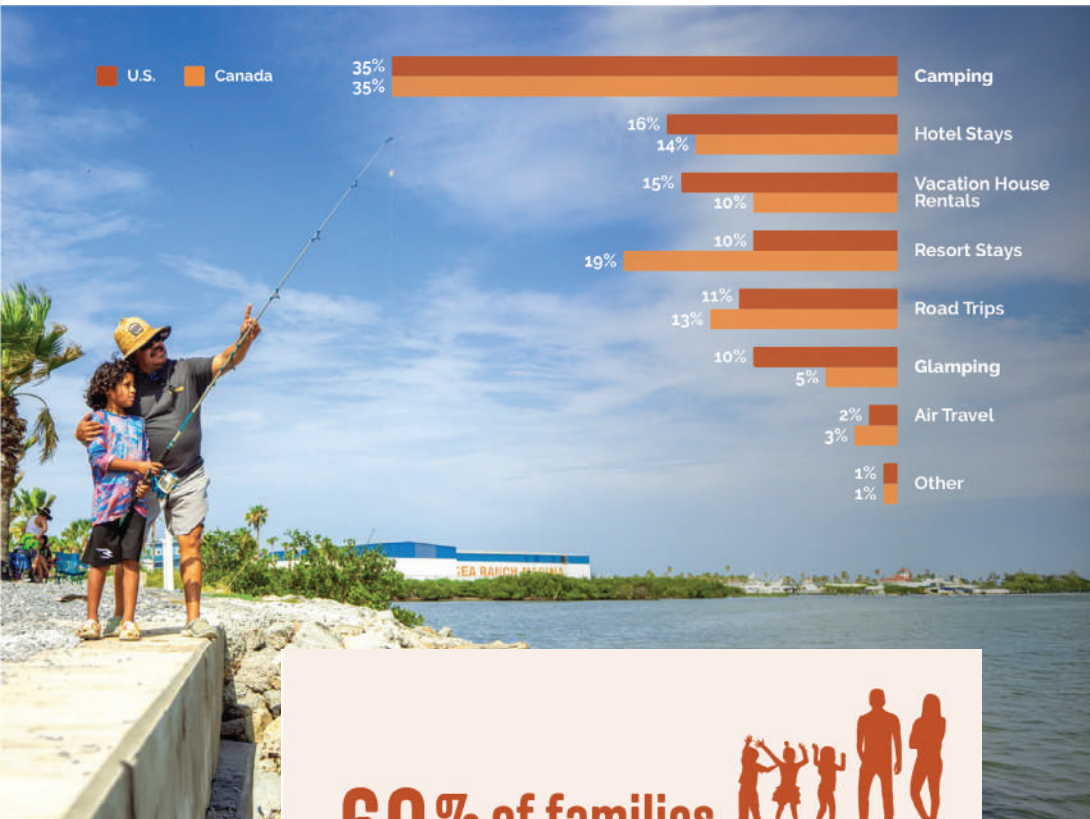
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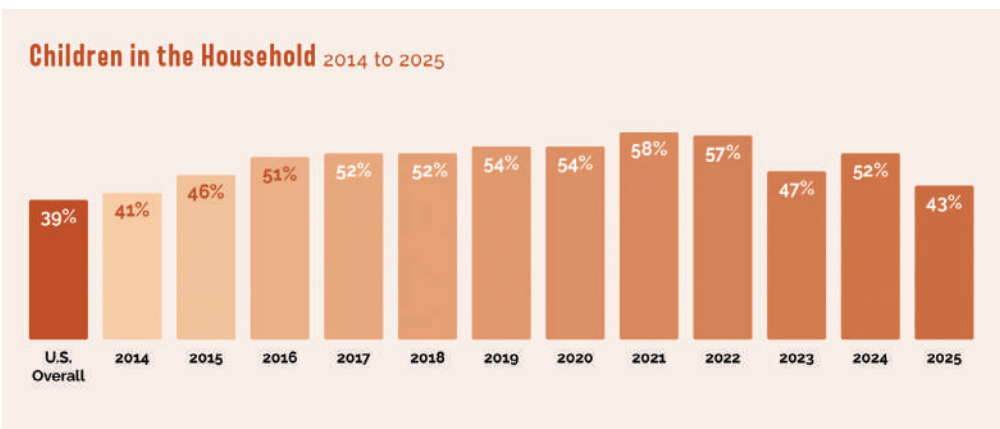
Sharing a Love for the Outdoors – Together

Parents who grew up camping seek to recreate those traditions for their own children, drawn by camping’s core value propositions: the nostalgic pull of multi-generational connection, genuine one-on-one interaction free from daily distractions, and affordable access to quality time. Despite reaching its lowest level in a decade, potentially a reflection of the shifting age of campers and competing vacations, families continue to view camping as one of the most accessible, low-stress travel options for bonding. This resilience signals both a challenge and an opportunity for operators to reclaim family camping as a growth segment.

Source: This is an excerpt from the 12th Annual 2026 Camping & Outdoor Hospitality report conducted by Cairn Consulting Group and sponsored by Kampgrounds of America, Inc. To download the complete report, visit <https://koa.com/north-american-camping-report>.



60% of families say camping offers a better chance to connect together over other forms of travel.



Campers with children in the household are more likely to:

- 37% vs. 27%** camp more often.
- 58% vs. 37%** rent an RV.
- 66%** want to recreate childhood memories while camping.

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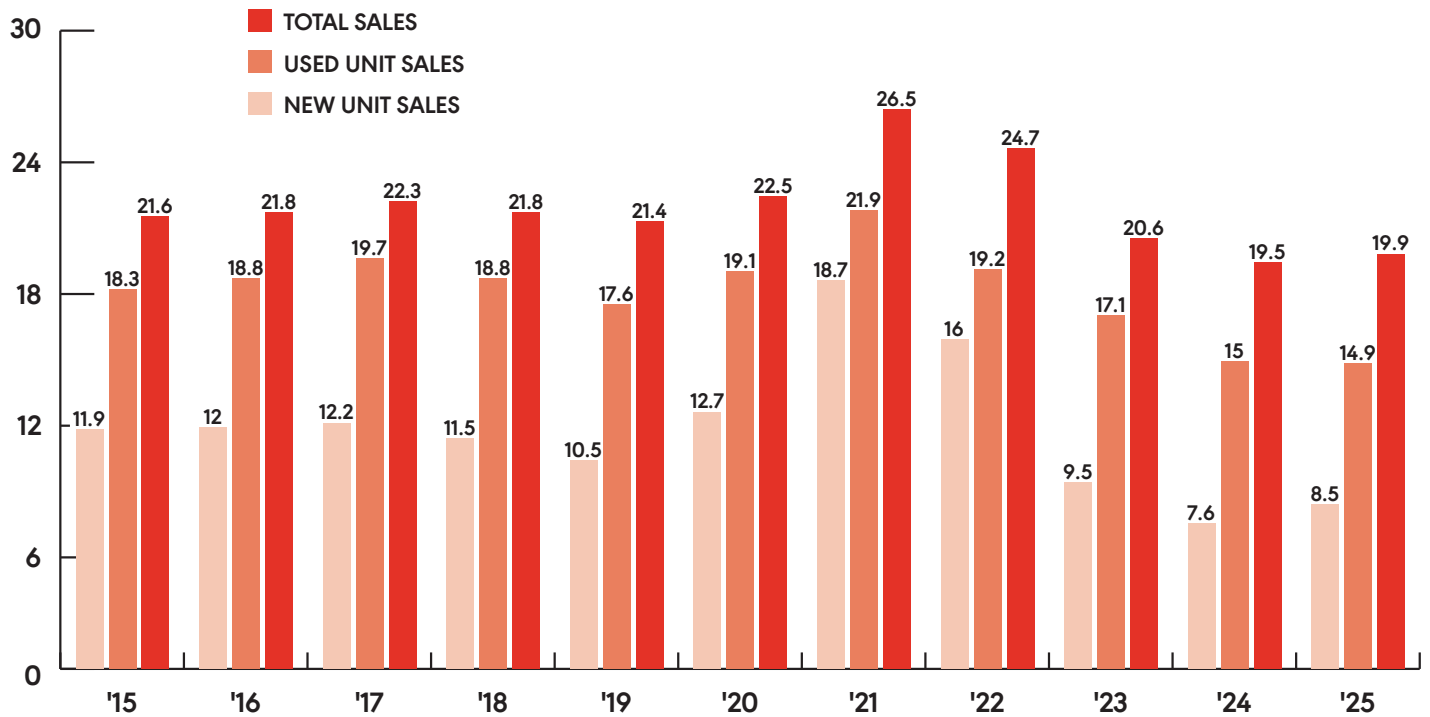
Morgan Stanley

2025

DEALERSHIP FINANCIAL BENCHMARKS

Source: Spader Business Management, an NCM Associates company
Analysis by Jeff Kurowski

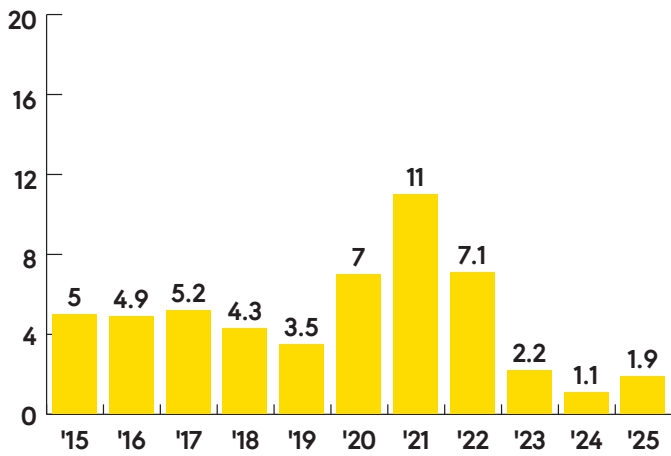
Is your dealership as profitable as it should be? For some insight, compare your margins and expense ratios with other dealerships around the country. This annual benchmarking section of *RV Executive Today* provides a point of reference on some important areas of dealership operations. The data is based on dealer-reported information and is an average, not a scientific study of all dealerships.



Gross Margin as Percentage of New RV, Used RV & Total Dealership Sales

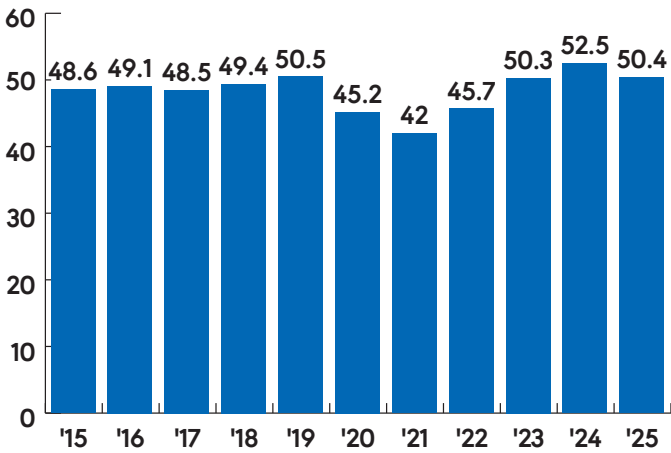
In 2025, the average dealership's gross margin as a percentage of sales rebounded somewhat. The gross margin (revenue minus cost of goods sold) as a percentage of new unit sales was 8.5 percent last year, up from 7.6 percent in 2024, the lowest in at least 10 years. The

gross margin as a percentage of sales of used RVs was 14.9 percent last year, about the same as a year earlier, and the gross margin as a percentage of sales from all departments was 19.9 percent in 2025, up slightly from 19.5 percent in 2024.



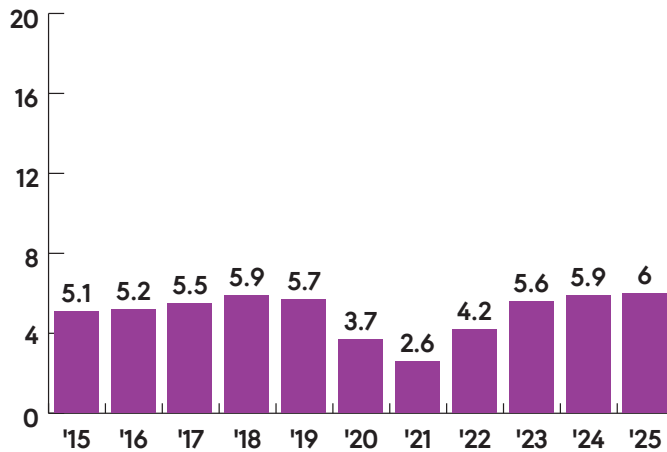
Net Profit as Percent of Sales

After reaching record highs in 2020 through 2022, the average RV dealer's net profit (all sales revenue minus all operating expenses) as a percentage of sales plunged to 1.1 percent in 2024 before recovering somewhat in 2025 to 1.9 percent.



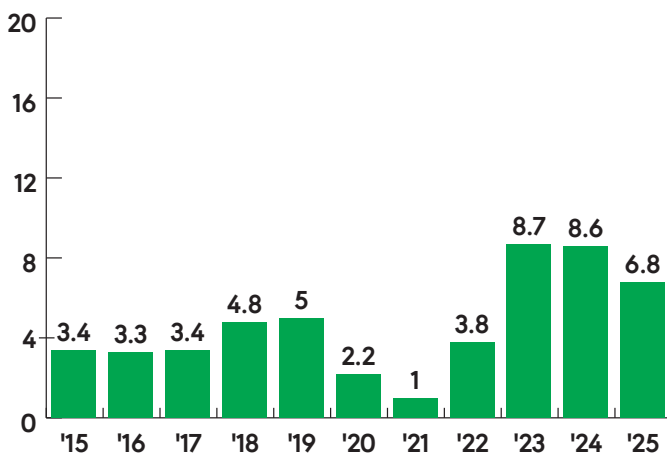
Personnel Expense as Percent of Available Income

Personnel expenses as a percentage of gross margin declined slightly in 2025 to 50.4 percent but remained unusually high when compared with most of the previous 10 years. In addition to 2025, the only years when personnel expenses as a percentage of gross margin were above 50 percent were 2019, 2023 and 2024.



Advertising Expense as Percent of Available Income

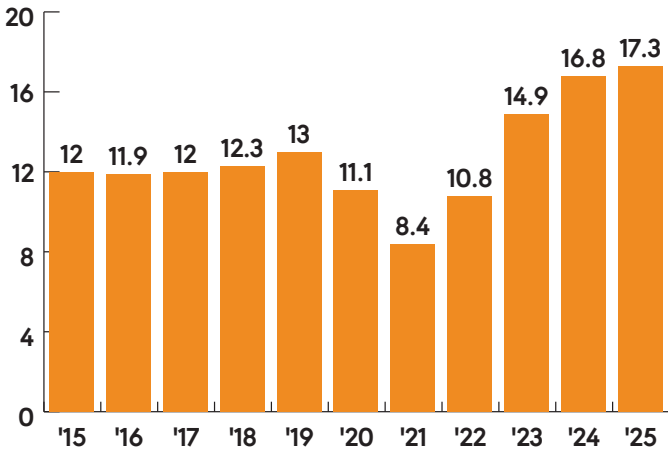
After post-Pandemic product shortages greatly reduced the need for advertising by RV dealers, advertising expense as a percentage of sales returned to pre-Pandemic levels the last few years. The average dealership spent 6 percent of sales on advertising last year, slightly higher than in 2024.



Floor Plan Interest Expense as Percent of Available Income

The Federal Reserve lowered its benchmark lending rate during 2024 and 2025, and this was reflected in RV dealers paying less for floor plan loans last year. The average dealership spent 6.8 percent of its sales revenue in 2025 on floor plan interest, down from 8.6 percent in 2024 and 8.7 percent in 2023. During the Pandemic, the average RV dealer spent only 2.2 percent of sales in 2020, and only 1 percent of sales in 2021 on floor plan interest. In 2022, as the Fed moved to raise borrowing costs, the average RV dealer spent 3.8 percent of sales on floor plan interest.

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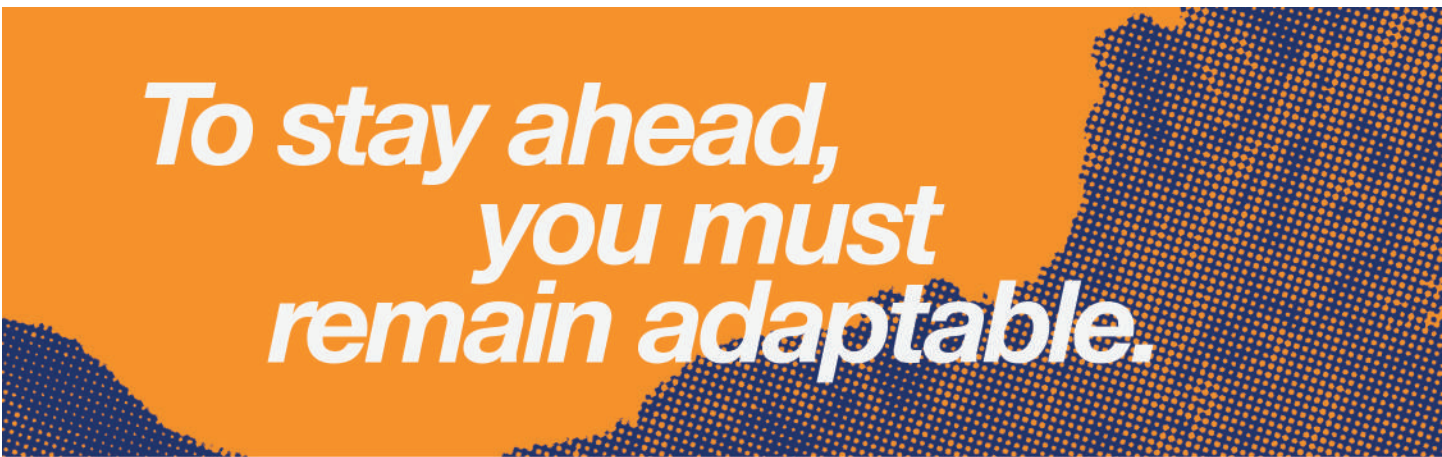
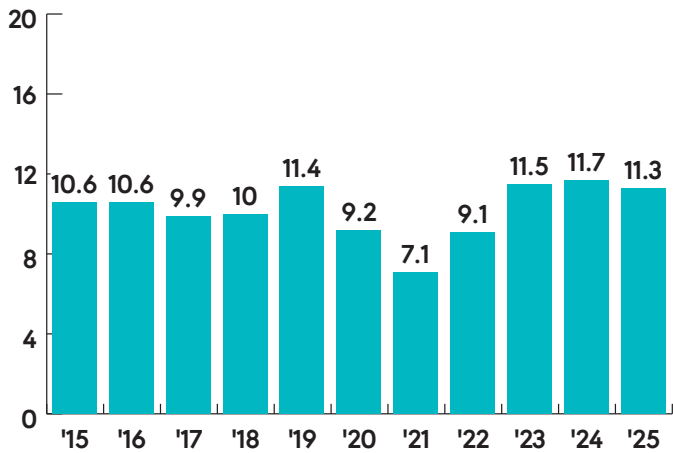


Fixed Expenses as Percent of Available Income

Fixed expenses (mortgages, leases, property taxes, etc.) as a percentage of gross margin rose in 2025 to 17.3 percent, the highest in at least 10 years. Fixed costs as a percentage of sales ranged from 12 to 13 percent from 2015 through 2019, before dropping to 8.4 percent in 2021. Since then, it climbed to 14.9 percent in 2023 and 16.8 percent in 2024.

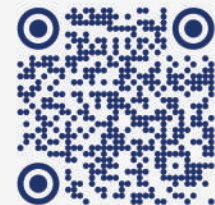
Other Variable Expenses as Percent of Available Income

Expenses that rise and fall depending on the amount of business – such as electricity and water bills plus seasonal employee wages – declined to 11.3 percent of sales in 2025, compared with the most recent peak 11.7 percent in 2024. ■



Training is critical to your organization's success in any market. At NCM, we help RV dealers face the future with confidence by teaching best practices that improve every aspect of their operation, from profitability and performance to leadership and customer retention.

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RV Dealers Report Small Profit in First Quarter 2026

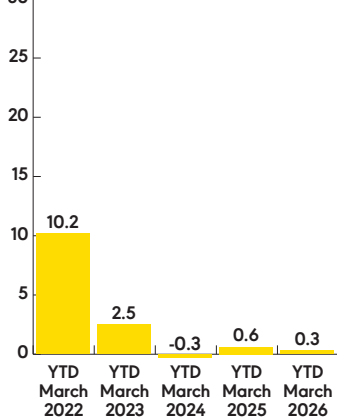
By Jeff Kurowski, Director of Industry Relations

For the second consecutive year, the average RV dealers' net profit as a percentage of sales was barely above breakeven during the first quarter. The average dealers net operating profit was 0.3 percent of sales during the first three months of 2026, down from 0.6 percent of sales during the first quarter of 2025, according to Spader Business Management, and NCM Associates Company. The slightly above breakeven profit margins during the first quarter of 2025 and 2026 represented an improvement over the first quarter of 2024, when the average dealer posted a net loss of 0.3 percent of sales. But there's still a long way to go to reach the net profit of 10.2 percent earned during the first quarter of 2022, or even the 2.5 percent achieved in early 2023. Here is how other data gathered by Spader for the first quarter of 2026 compares with the first quarters of 2022 through 2025:

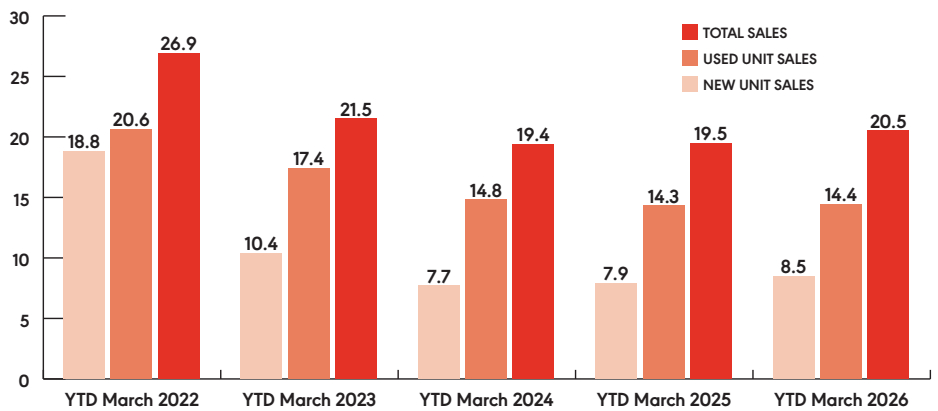
- Gross margin (sales revenue minus cost of goods sold) as a percentage of **total sales** for the average dealer during the first quarter of 2026 was 20.5 percent, up from 19.5 percent in the first three months of 2025. In 2024, it was 19.4 percent, in 2023, it was 21.5 percent, and in 2022, it was 26.9 percent.
- Gross margin as a percentage of **used unit sales** was 14.4 percent during the first three months of 2026, up slightly from 14.3 percent in 2025, but lower than 14.8 percent in 2024, 17.4 percent in 2023 and 20.6 percent in 2022.

- Gross margin as a percentage of **new unit sales** was 8.5 percent in early 2026, a significant improvement over 7.9 percent in the first quarter of 2025 and 7.7 percent in 2024, but much below 10.4 percent in 2023 and 18.8 percent in 2022.
- **Personnel expense** as a percentage of sales was 52.4 percent during the first quarter of 2026, up from 51.7 percent during the same portion of 2025. In 2024, it was 53.5 percent, in 2023, it was 48.3 percent, and in 2022, it was 41.5 percent.
- Dealers' **advertising expense** as a percentage of sales was 8.3 percent in the first quarter of 2026, up from 7.9 percent in the first quarter of 2025. It also was 7.9 percent in the first quarter of 2024, 6.7 percent in 2023, and 4.1 percent in 2022.
- **Floor plan interest expense** as a percentage of sales was 7.8 percent in the first three months of 2026, 8.1 percent in the first quarter of 2025, 10.1 percent in early 2024, 8.9 percent in the first quarter of 2023, but only 1.8 percent in early 2022.
- **Fixed costs** as a percentage of sales was 18.9 percent in the first quarter of 2026, 18.6 percent in early 2025, and even 18 percent during the first three months of 2024, 14.6 percent in early 2023, and 9.2 percent in 2022.
- **"Other variable costs"** as a percentage of sales was 11.3 percent during the first quarter of 2026, versus 11.2 percent in the first three months of 2025, 12.2 percent in early 2024, 11.3 percent during the first quarter of 2023 and 7.7 percent in early 2022. ■

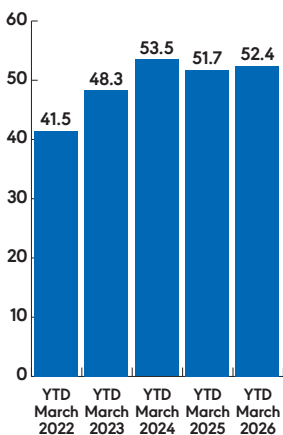
Net Profit as % of Sales



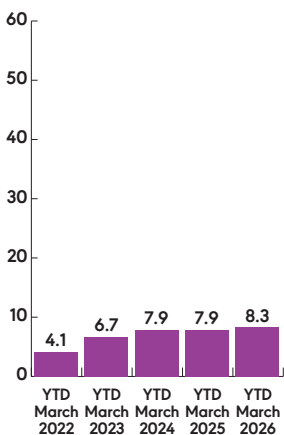
Gross Margins as % of Sales



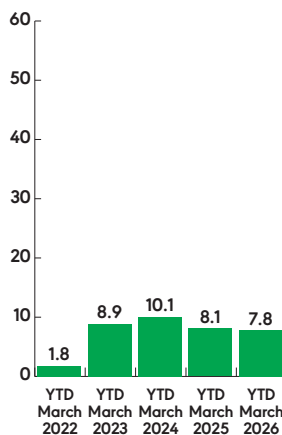
Personnel Expense as % of Gross Margin



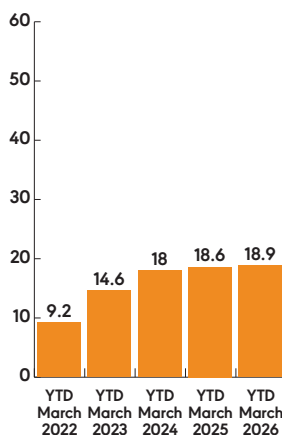
Advertising Expense as % of Gross Margin



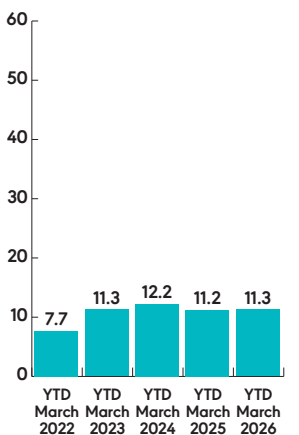
Floor Plan Interest Expense as % of Gross Margin



Fixed Costs as % of Gross Margin



Other Variable Costs as % of Gross Margin





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KOA's O'Rourke and Winnebago's Happe Outline Intersection of Health and the Great Outdoors

By RVDA Staff

Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR) brought together government officials, state recreation leaders, innovative researchers, and top outdoor industry and health CEOs for the inaugural **National Executive Forum on Health and Outdoor Recreation** in Washington, D.C. last month.

The Forum spotlighted the \$1.3 trillion outdoor recreation economy and its 5.2 million jobs, positioning the sector as a ready-made solution to America's growing chronic disease burden, rising healthcare costs, and mental health challenges.

KOA CEO Toby O'Rourke and Winnebago CEO Mike Happe were among the invited panelists, underscoring the RV industry's leadership in the national conversation about health and the outdoors. The forum emphasized cross sector collaboration, evidence based research, and real world solutions that elevate outdoor recreation as a critical tool for preventive health.

"Camping sits at the intersection of two critical and converging priorities: health and human connection," O'Rourke said. "Our research not only tracks how people travel, but why they seek the outdoors in the first place. The findings are clear: access to nature is not a luxury, it is foundational to wellbeing. Outdoor hospitality has a meaningful role to play in delivering that access at scale."

Happe noted that linking outdoor activity to improved wellness is "in the early stages of a movement," adding that it should be a bipartisan priority at a time when bipartisan issues are increasingly rare.

New Rural Outdoor Recreation & Health Catalyst Grants

One of the major announcements at the Forum was the launch of the Rural Outdoor Recreation and Health Catalyst Grant Program, a first-of-its-kind ORR initiative designed to put resources directly into rural communities. Supported by the Richard King Mellon Foundation, the LOR Foundation, and The VF Foundation, the grants will fund locally led projects that connect outdoor recreation with preventive health, mental well being, and social connection. These investments aim to demonstrate how community based outdoor health strategies can be implemented nationally.

"The research is clear, the momentum is real, and the partners are in the room," said ORR President Jessica Turner. "What comes next is alignment across health systems, insurers, schools, employers, and land managers to activate a national vision that is already within reach."

Turner emphasized that ORR's goal is to influence how schools approach recess, how employee benefit plans reward outdoor time, and how the national health system views the outdoors as essential infrastructure.

Action Items Moving Forward

The America's Outdoor Era: ORR is calling on businesses and trade organizations across the outdoor economy to take measurable action in three areas:



Top photo: Panelist Toby O'Rourke (center)

Bottom photo: Panelist Mike Happe (center)

- ◆ Supporting outdoor infrastructure and programs that expand equitable access
- ◆ Embedding outdoor activity into workplace culture, benefits, and employee wellness
- ◆ Partnering with health systems to advance the outdoors as a tool for prevention and better patient outcomes

ORR will highlight organizations taking action throughout Great Outdoors Month in June.

State Leadership: The Confluence of States welcomed Connecticut as its 22nd member and announced new programs, partnerships, and investments focused on outdoor recreation and health. These efforts will culminate in the first ever Summit on Outdoor Recreation and Health this fall.







Science Backed Education: The American College of Lifestyle Medicine and the Nature & Health Alliance announced a new partnership supported by a grant from the REI Cooperative Action Fund to launch an education series on the science of nature and well being.

The two day forum opened at the White House Historical Association's Decatur House, where ORR presented its Outdoor Recreation Lifetime Achievement Award to Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*. ■


June Is Great Outdoors Month

By RVDA Staff

Every June, Outdoor Recreation Roundtable coordinates Great Outdoors Month, a month-long celebration of outdoor recreation and America's parks, wildlife refuges, forests, monuments, marine sanctuaries, waters, national conservation lands, and other natural treasures. Great Outdoors Month first started as a Great Outdoors Week in 1998. Since then, every president, Congress, and states across the country have issued proclamations designating June as Great Outdoors Month. Great Outdoors Month is coordinated by Outdoor Recreation Roundtable and includes events held throughout the month including:

-  **Kids to Parks Day:** coordinated by the National Park Trust (May 24)
-  **American Hiking Society's National Trails Day®:** (June 7)
-  **National Fishing and Boating Week:** coordinated by the National Boating and Fishing Foundation (June 1-8)
-  **Great Outdoors Day of Service:** coordinated by The Corps Network (June 12)
-  **National Get Outdoors Day:** (June 14) U.S. Forest Service fee free day
-  **National Go RVing Day:** (June 14) coordinated by Go RVing



-  **Great American Campout:** coordinated by the National Wildlife Federation
-  **National Marina Days:** coordinated by the Association of Marina Industries ■

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Campers Still Want to Get Outdoors – but Economic Pressures Persist

By Travis O. Pryor

As the 2026 camping season moves into what should be its busiest stretch, campgrounds across the country are confronting a mix of economic and environmental headwinds that threaten to dampen early season optimism. High fuel prices, regional weather challenges, and shifting consumer behavior are all contributing to a slower-than-expected start.

Strong Memorial Day, Softer Outlook

At the Fort Collins Lakeside KOA Holiday in Colorado, Guest Service Manager Mark Widdows reported a full house for Memorial Day weekend – typically a reliable indicator of a strong summer ahead. But the momentum didn't last.

"We're seeing a number of cancellations for the coming weeks due to fuel prices," Widdows said.

Gasoline hovering well above \$4 per gallon nationwide is forcing many RVers and tent campers to rethink their plans. In Colorado, an exceptionally mild and dry winter has added another complication: Larimer County's fire ban, which prohibits campfires and outdoor cooking at the campground.

Economic Caution Across the Outdoor Sector



The broader outdoor hospitality industry is experiencing similar patterns. Scott Bahr, president and CEO of Cairn Consulting, said early year expectations were higher than what the market has delivered so far.

"The hospitality industry as a whole has been seeing only marginal growth due to gas prices and the lackluster economy," Bahr told RVDA. Still, he sees room for improvement as the season progresses.

"Even with the gas prices, camping is still highly affordable," he said. A family of four traveling by RV and preparing their own meals can still enjoy a cost effective vacation. Bahr expects more RVers to return to campgrounds later in the summer – potentially booking at the last minute if fuel prices ease.

"People still want to travel and take vacations," he said. "They'll adjust their budgets based on gas fluctuations. The desire is still there, and the interest in RVing is still high."

Regional Differences: A Strong Winter in the Northeast

While the West struggled with a dry winter, the Northeast experienced the opposite. Ski resorts in New England and Maine reported strong seasons, even drawing visitors from Western states. But the improved winter conditions haven't yet translated into stronger early season campground traffic.



Fort Collins Lakeside KOA Holiday



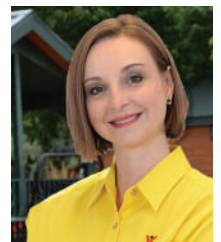
Fort Collins Lakeside KOA Holiday

"Things are slow," said Erin Martin, manager of Bethel Outdoor Adventures in Bethel, Maine, which offers river rafting and a 33 site campground. "Our Fourth of July is usually completely booked up, but right now we have so many openings."

Memorial Day weekend – only the campground's second weekend open – saw just 13 sites booked. Still, Martin remains optimistic. "More people want to experience camping because it's an affordable option. It's just going to take some education and the opportunity for them to choose camping over more expensive travel."

Participation Gap: A Growing Industry Challenge

At the recent RVBusiness Power Breakfast in Elkhart KOA President and CEO Toby O'Rourke highlighted a trend that may be contributing to the softer start: more people are camping, but they're taking fewer trips.



There were 52 million campers in 2025, a 24% increase over 2019. But 34% of those campers only camped once last year.

"This difference in participation has a big impact at campgrounds, but it also has a big impact at dealers," O'Rourke said. "If people are not using their product, they're not inclined to upgrade or purchase another one."

She called the participation gap "the defining issue in our industry right now."

"It's not about increasing awareness," she said. "It's about attacking participation."



Looking Ahead

Despite the economic pressures, industry leaders agree that the underlying demand for camping and RV travel remains strong. The challenge - and opportunity - lies in helping consumers feel confident enough to take more trips, even in a fluctuating economy.

As O'Rourke put it, "Making multiple camping trips seem possible and feasible again is key to jump starting the industry." ■



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RVRA Survey Uncovers Opportunities, Challenges

By Jeff Kurowski, Director of Industry Relations

RV rentals are a gateway to industry growth if companies can use new marketing strategies to reach more potential customers, according to the annual RV Rental Association (RVRA) survey conducted this spring.

The survey showed the 2026 rental season was off to a good start with 56 percent RV rental companies having more reservations on their books. Here is a breakdown of the results:

- ◆ 9 percent said their 2026 rental reservations were up 20 percent or more compared with 2025.
- ◆ 17 percent said their bookings were up 10 to 19 percent.
- ◆ 13 percent said they were up 5 to 9 percent.
- ◆ 17 percent were up 1 to 4 percent.
- ◆ 22 percent felt they'll have as many bookings as in 2025
- ◆ 4 percent said bookings will be down 1 to 4 percent.
- ◆ 13 percent said down 5 to 9 percent
- ◆ 4 percent predict it will be down 20 percent or more.

What's the Outlook for RV rentals in 2026?

Most RV rental companies believe their 2026 RV rental revenue will be higher or at least the same as it was in 2025:

- ◆ 57 percent think their rental revenue will be higher this year.
- ◆ 35 percent believe it will be the same as in 2025.
- ◆ 4 percent feel it'll be lower.
- ◆ 4 percent don't know.

Staying Profitable the Biggest Challenge

Higher revenue does not automatically mean the RV rental business is without challenges. The biggest challenge - according to those responding to the survey -- is staying profitable. Survey respondents were asked to rank 11 challenges to success on a 10-point scale with 1 being the most important challenge and 10 being the least important challenge. Here are the rankings:

- ◆ Staying profitable (2.57)
- ◆ Attracting potential customers to their dealership's website or social media pages (4.76)
- ◆ Rental season is too short (5.00)
- ◆ Staff training (5.10)
- ◆ Finding affordably priced insurance (5.71)
- ◆ Rental units breaking down when in use (6.43)
- ◆ Acquisition of rental fleet units (6.43)
- ◆ Finding finance sources (6.57)

- ◆ Coach issues (7.43)
- ◆ Tire issues (7.71)
- ◆ Chassis issues (8.29)

Why Do People Rent RVs Instead of Buying?

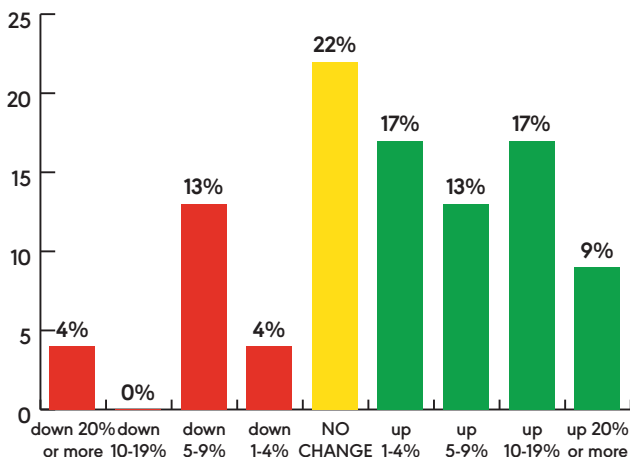
Do people rent RVs for vacation instead of buying them because RVs cost too much? The RVRA survey suggests that's not the case:

- ◆ 4 percent of rental operators said their customers feel buying is too expensive.
- ◆ 83 percent of rental operators said their customers do not believe they'd use their RV enough to justify the investment.
- ◆ 9 percent said their customers rent because they want to try a particular model or size.
- ◆ 4 percent said their customers feel there's too many hidden costs of ownership such as paying to store their RV.

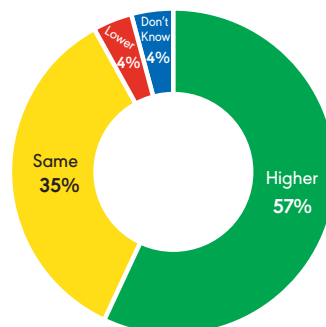
Repeat Rental Business an Opportunity

A way rental companies can meet the profitability challenge is to maximize repeat business. Forty-eight of those filling out the survey said they have customers who have rented an RV once before, and 24 percent had customers who rented at

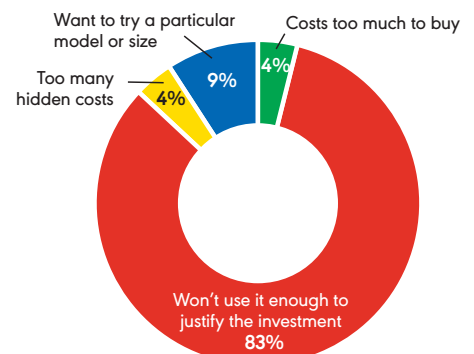
How did your 2026 bookings compare with 2025?



Do you think your RV rental revenue will be higher or lower in 2026?



Why Rent Instead of Buy?



least twice before. Another way is for “traditional” RV rental businesses to use peer-to-peer (P2P) RV rental platforms to complement their marketing programs:

- ◆ 41 percent of RV rental operators feel posting some or all of their rental fleet on a P2P platform “would be a great addition to my marketing program,”
- ◆ 18 percent might use a P2P platform “during the off-season or when business is slow.”
- ◆ 23 percent do not plan to use P2P platforms.
- ◆ 18 percent are undecided.

Do P2P Platforms Help or Hurt Business?

P2P platforms and “traditional brick & mortar” RV rental companies do compete against each other, but many traditional operators believe the competition is helpful:

- ◆ 45 percent of the rental companies feel P2P platforms are “somewhat helpful” to their profit margins.
- ◆ 14 percent said P2P platforms “somewhat hurt” their rental business margins.
- ◆ 14 percent feel P2P platforms hurt their margins “a great amount.”

- ◆ 14 percent think P2P platforms had “no noticeable impact” on their profits.
- ◆ 14 percent didn’t know.

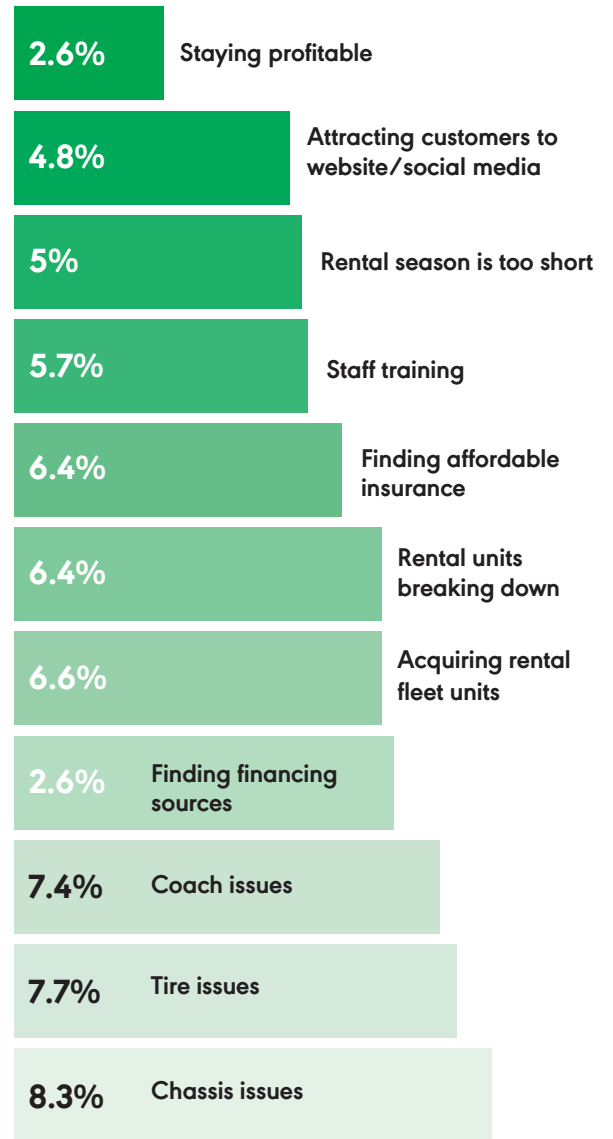
Many Customer Search P2P Platforms First

RV renters are savvy when it comes to searching for deals as indicated by the fact many search P2P platforms first before renting from a traditional RV rental company:

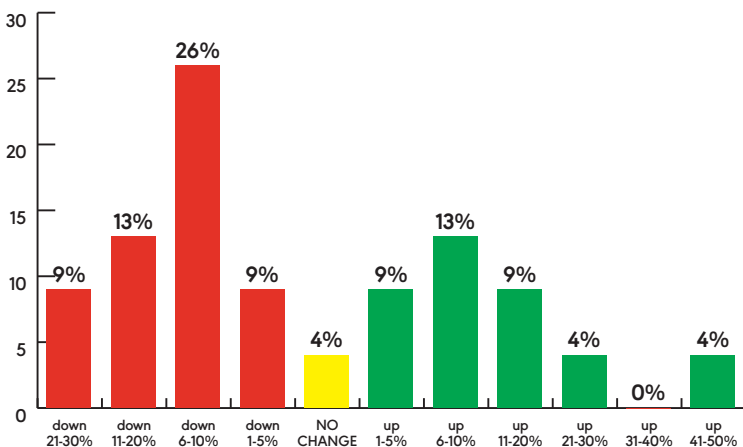
- ◆ 55 percent of traditional rental operators said 11 to 25 percent of their customers searched P2P platforms first.
- ◆ 36 percent said 1 to 10 percent of their customers searched P2P platforms first.
- ◆ 9 percent said more than 25 percent of their customers searched P2P platforms first.

RVRA is a division of the RVDA dedicated to enhancing professionalism and customer service in the RV rental industry. The annual survey was conducted through the RV Retailer Intelligence program, a service of the RV Assistance Corp. (RVAC), a wholly owned subsidiary of RVDA. To find an RVRA member company, visit www.rvra.org. ■

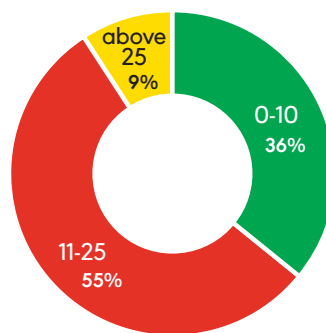
What are the biggest challenge to success in the RV rental business? (1 being most important, 10 least important)



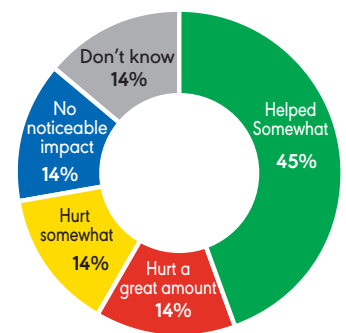
How did your total RV rental revenue in 2025 compare with your rental revenue in 2024?



What percentage of your rental business comes from customers who searched peer-to-peer platforms first?



Have peer-to-peer rental platforms helped or hurt your rental business profit margin?



Leadership Is...Quiet

By *Dustin Kaehr*



Editor's Note: This article is part of an ongoing leadership series by Dustin Kaehr that focuses on practical strategies for building stronger teams and more effective leaders.

For a Tuesday in the Midwest, the dealership sales floor was buzzing. Across the building, a frustrated customer was headed for the door, having just stormed off from being in the back with a tech, and the loudest tech in the shop was already telling everyone within earshot why it wasn't his fault. The service manager was scrambling. The GM was pacing.

Then there was Marcus. Marcus had been a service writer for nine years. Quiet guy. Steady. He didn't post on the group chat. He didn't pile on in meetings. He didn't tell anyone how busy he was.

While the noise swirled, Marcus stepped out into the parking lot, caught the customer before she pulled away, and asked one question: "Can you walk me through what just happened?"

Twenty minutes later, the customer was back inside. Coffee in hand. Apologizing for raising her voice. Marcus had already pulled the file, looped in the right tech, and texted the GM a one-line summary: "Handled. She's staying. Loaner Friday."

No one clapped. No one announced it. Marcus went back to his desk and answered three voicemails before lunch. That's a Silent Leader. And if you're not paying attention, you'll miss them every time.

The Ones You're Not Watching

Walk into any dealership, and you'll spot the obvious leaders. The talkers. The ones who fill the silence, run the huddle, and dominate the floor. Some of them are great. Many of them are loud, and that's about it.

But look closer. There's almost always someone else shaping the room. They don't grandstand. They don't perform. They lead in the spaces between the noise. These are your Silent Leaders.

They're the parts advisor everyone checks with before quoting a tricky job. The detailer who pulls a new hire aside instead of calling them out on the line. The F&I manager whose paperwork sets the standard so quietly that the rest of the team raises their game without ever being asked. Influence isn't volume. It's trust compounded over time.

Four Things Silent Leaders Do

If you study the quiet ones on your team, you'll notice a pattern. They consistently do four things that the loud ones often skip.

1 They listen longer than they speak. Their questions land harder than other people's answers. When a Silent Leader asks a tech "What do you think happened on that unit?" the tech actually thinks. That's coaching without the lecture.



- 2 They build people in private.** No audience required. The Silent Leader doesn't correct a teammate in front of customers. They don't celebrate themselves in the group text. They pull people aside. They send the short note. They do the work no one will ever see.
- 3 They protect the standard when no one is watching.** That's where culture actually lives. The Silent Leader walks past the dirty showroom floor and grabs the broom. They re-do the PDI checklist the right way even when no one would have caught the shortcut. Standards don't survive on posters. They survive because somebody refuses to let them slip.
- 4 They make others look good. And the room notices.** The Silent Leader hands credit away on purpose. They lift the new hire. They put the rookie sales rep in front of the GM. The team feels it, even when no one names it.

The Cost of Only Rewarding the Loud

Here's where most dealerships get it wrong. We promote the talkers. We celebrate the closers. We hand the microphone to the same three people every Monday morning.

Meanwhile, the Silent Leader who is actually holding the team together gets passed over for a manager seat because she "doesn't have the personality for it." The tech who mentors three apprentices on his own time gets nothing, while the loud one gets the spiff.

If you only reward the loud, you'll lose the leaders who hold the team together. If you only model the loud, you'll teach your people that leadership is about performance rather than presence. That's a culture problem dressed up as a personality preference.

Your Move This Month

Walk your dealership this week with new eyes. Watch the service counter. Watch the parts counter. Watch the back of the showroom during the morning meeting. Who's leading without a microphone? Who do people quietly orbit when a tough call needs to be made?

Name them. Thank them. Promote what they do. Then tell them specifically what you see. Not a generic "good job." A specific sentence. "I noticed how you handled that customer Tuesday. That's leadership." Watch what happens to the room. Because the strongest leaders in your

The Silent Leader walks past the dirty showroom floor and grabs the broom.

dealership aren't the ones who demand the spotlight. They're the ones who don't need it. Leadership is...Quiet.

About the author:

Dustin Kaehr, founder of the Think. Lead. Live. Group, equips people, teams, and organizations to think differently, lead courageously, and live passionately. As a leadership coach, Kaehr works across industries with executives and leadership teams to gain operational clarity, insights to build a healthy work culture, and methods to drive sustainable performance. Connect at dk@thinkleadlive.com. ■

Why Cross Training Fixed Operations Staff Is Becoming Essential for Today's RV Dealerships

Compiled by RVDA Staff

In an RV market with sales volume and margin pressures, the strength of a dealership's fixed operations department remains a key element of dealership profitability. Now, more dealerships are turning to the **Mike Molino RV Learning Center's Fixed Operations Online Training Program** to cross train their teams and build a deeper bench of skilled employees.

The results speak for themselves. More than 1,600 fixed operations professionals have enrolled in the program, which can lead to smoother operations, higher customer satisfaction, and stronger profitability. Cross training is no longer a "nice to have." It has become a strategic advantage.

Cross-Training Helps Reduce Bottlenecks

Dealerships that invest in cross training report fewer bottlenecks and better coverage during peak season or unexpected staffing shortages. When service writers understand parts processes, when parts staff understand warranty requirements, and when everyone understands how their role affects Repair Event Cycle Time, the entire operation becomes more efficient. Communication improves, repair orders are cleaner, and technicians get the right parts the first time. That translates directly into faster turnaround times and

fewer customer complaints. The benefits extend beyond workflow. Cross trained employees are more confident and more engaged because they understand how the whole department functions – not just their individual tasks. That sense of competence and connection reduces turnover, a major challenge for dealerships nationwide. Employees who see a path for growth are far more likely to stay, and the RV Learning Center's online courses align with certification tracks that help build tomorrow's service managers, parts managers, and warranty leaders.

Foundational Training for New Hires

For customers, the impact is immediate. A cross trained team delivers a more seamless experience, with staff who can answer questions, explain processes, and keep customers informed. In an era when CSI scores and online reviews influence every sale, that level of professionalism matters.

The RV Learning Center's Fixed Operations Online Training Program provides a consistent, industry validated foundation for every role in the department. Dealerships can onboard new



employees quickly and ensure everyone receives the same high quality instruction. The flexibility of online learning also means staff can train at their own pace without disrupting daily operations.

As the industry continues to evolve, fixed operations will remain a critical driver of dealership success. Cross training through the RV Learning Center is one of the most effective ways to strengthen your team, improve customer satisfaction, and build long term profitability. For dealerships looking to elevate performance and prepare for the future, now is the time to invest in the people who keep the service department running. Visit www.rvlearningcenter.com for more information. ■

Can Your DMS Influence Your AI Search Results? YES. Here's How

By Raginee Mamgain, IDS

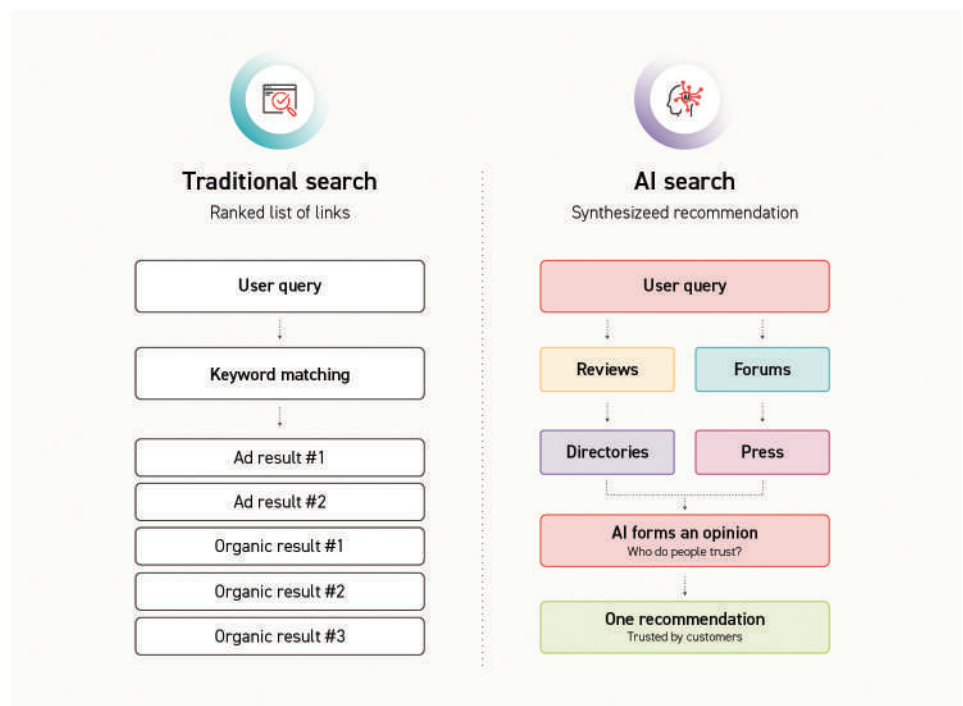
Nobody saw this coming quite so fast. A customer sits down at their kitchen table, opens ChatGPT, and types: "Where's the best place to buy an RV in [city]?" They don't Google. They don't scroll through ads. They just... ask. And they trust what comes back.

We ran that exact experiment across four AI tools: ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Perplexity. Same question, several markets. The results stopped us cold. Dealers we'd expect to top any list weren't on it. Others we'd never have predicted were showing up everywhere.

The difference wasn't website design. It wasn't ad spend. It wasn't even SEO. It was reputation.

How AI Search Actually Works

AI search tools don't return a ranked list of websites. They form an opinion. They synthesize thousands of data points - reviews, forum posts, directory listings, local press mentions, social conversations - and they make a recommendation. Like a well-informed friend who's done all the research for you. That changes everything about how you get found. Your website still matters. But it's one input into a much



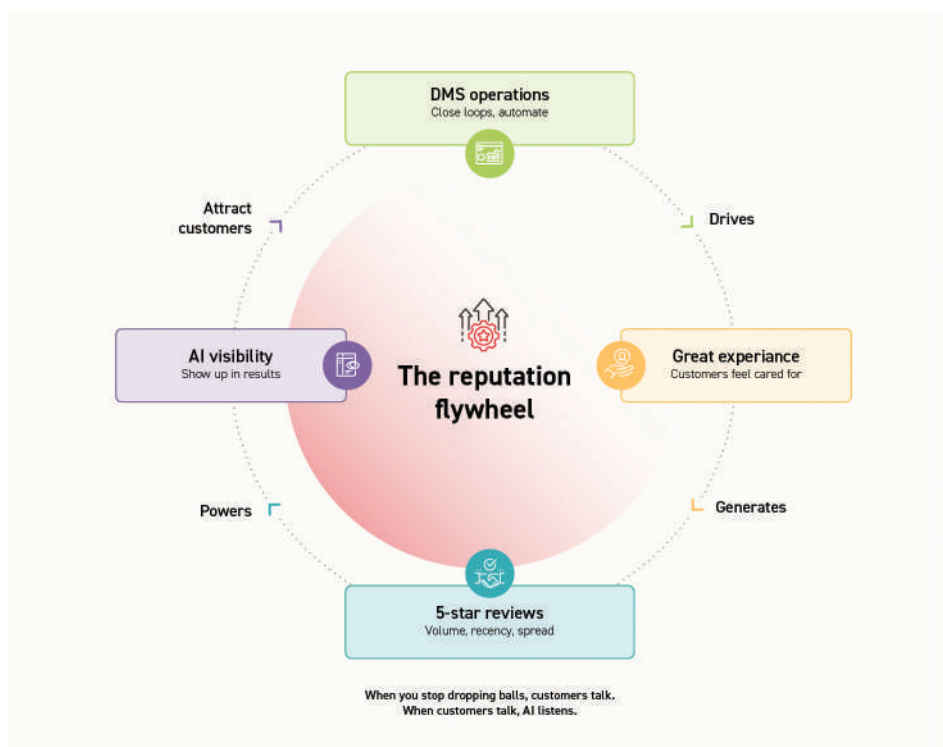
larger picture. The question AI is really answering isn't "who has the best website?" It's "who do people trust?" And trust is built in your service lane. At your delivery. In your follow-up call three weeks after the sale.

The Connection Most Dealers Are Missing

Here's where it gets interesting and where most dealers aren't connecting the dots yet. Your DMS isn't just a back-office tool. It's the engine behind every customer interaction that either builds or erodes your reputation. And your reputation is now your search ranking.

Think about it this way: A customer comes in for a warranty repair. Your service team is juggling ROs, parts are on backorder, and nobody loops back to the customer with an update. They wait. They get frustrated. They leave a 2-star review that mentions being ignored. That review gets read by AI. And suddenly you're not on the list.

Now flip it. Your DMS flags the open RO, prompts a service advisor to call with an update, automatically sends a follow-up when the unit is ready, and triggers a review request 48 hours after pickup. The customer feels taken care of. They leave a five-star rating and mention the advisor by name. That review gets read by AI, too. And you move up the list. Same dealership. Different outcome. Different system.



“Dealers often ask us what they should be doing to stay competitive. The answer hasn’t changed: take care of your customers. What has changed is that AI is now watching whether you do. Your DMS is what makes that consistency possible at scale.”

– Frank Tamburrini,
General Manager, IDS

What Dealers Can Do Differently

Dealers can strengthen their online reputation by focusing on a few operational fundamentals:

- ◆ **Close service loops faster** – so customers never feel forgotten during a repair
- ◆ **Automate follow-up** – turning a one-time buyer into a repeat customer and an active referral source
- ◆ **Get visibility into the full customer journey** – so your team can deliver a consistent experience at every touchpoint, not just at the point of sale

This is what levels the playing field. Not a bigger marketing budget. Not a website redesign. A system that makes it structurally hard to drop the ball on a customer. When you stop dropping balls, customers talk. When customers talk, AI listens.

- Systematize review collection**
Volume, recency, and spread across platforms – Google, Yelp, DealerRater. This is the single highest-signal input for AI search. Make review collection a process, not an afterthought.
- Lock down your directory**
Your name, address, and phone number need to be identical everywhere – Google, Yelp, Facebook, industry directories. Inconsistency confuses AI and costs you visibility.
- Add schema markup**
This is structured data that helps AI accurately read your inventory, hours, location, and services. A developer can implement it in a day. It’s table stakes.
- Write content the way buyers search**
FAQ pages, buying guides, service explainers – written in plain language that mirrors how a real person would ask an AI. Not keyword-stuffed. Genuinely helpful.
- Earn third-party mentions:**
Local press coverage, RV forum discussions, industry publications. AI treats these as trust signals. Be active in the communities your customers are already in.

But Don’t Ignore Your Website Either

Operational excellence drives reputation. Reputation drives AI visibility. But there are also concrete steps your marketing person can take right now to improve how AI reads your dealership. (See graphic above.)

The Bottom Line

AI search is here. Your customers are using it right now to decide where to buy their next RV – and where to send their friends.

The dealers who show up aren’t gaming an algorithm. They’re running their operations in a way that makes

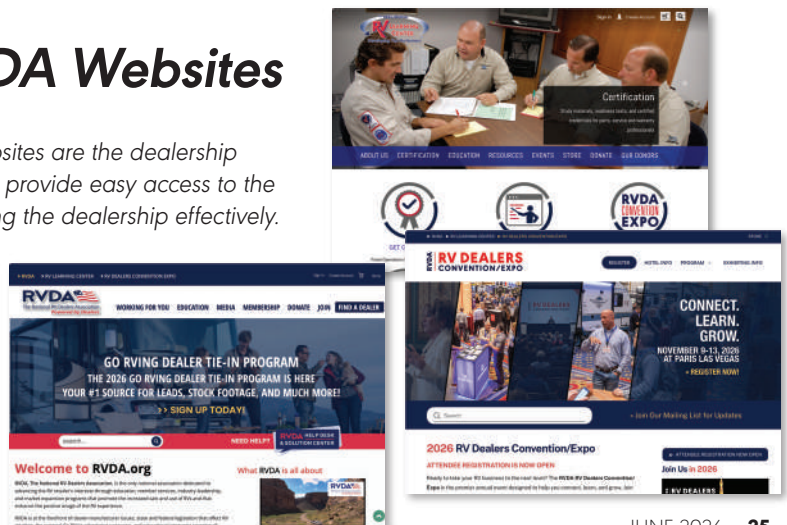
customers want to talk about them. And they have systems in place that make delivering that experience repeatable, not accidental. Your DMS is either helping you build that reputation or making it harder.

As AI-driven search continues to evolve, dealerships that consistently deliver strong customer experiences will be better positioned to earn positive reviews, referrals, and visibility online.

About the author: Raginee Mamgain leads marketing at IDS and covers brand, demand generation, and thought leadership. With more than 12 years in marketing, she brings a sharp focus on how emerging technology, including AI, is reshaping the marketing landscape. ■

Take Advantage of Your RVDA Websites

The RVDA, Mike Molino RV Learning Center, and convention websites are the dealership employees’ complete online resources. These interactive websites provide easy access to the critical resources that assist dealers and their employees in running the dealership effectively. Download fact sheets on dealership best practices or the latest retail statistics, search training opportunities, and purchase CD-ROMs, publications, videos, or webcasts. RVDA member dealerships and any of their employees can have 24/7 access to most of RVDA’s dealer specific information. Make www.rvda.org, www.rvlearningcenter.com and www.rvda.org/convention your first source for all dealership information.



The Triple Threat

By Tom Kline, Better Vantage Point | Tuck The Octopus

A “triple threat” is usually a compliment. In theater, it’s the performer who can act, sing, and dance. In football, it’s the player who can run, pass, and kick. It’s versatility. Mastery. The kind of well-rounded excellence that makes someone dangerous in a good way.

But in today’s dealership environment, the “triple threat” has taken on a very different meaning which, unfortunately, is more somber, and even ominous, depending on how you operate.

Because now, there are three threats aimed at the dealership. And they’re coming from three distinct directions at once.

Threat #1: The Customer

Let’s start with the most obvious threat from a risk and compliance perspective. It is the customers. Customers today are empowered, informed, and, in many cases, skeptical. They’re walking in with screenshots. They’re walking in with expectations. And increasingly, they have complaints.

What are they doing with the complaints? Are they posting on Google reviews and Facebook? Yes, sometimes. Other times, they are writing directly to Motor Vehicle Dealer Boards, state Attorneys’ General, and the FTC.

I was just on the telephone with a state regulator and here is what she said: As an agency, they are receiving so many calls



(“inundated and overwhelmed”), they are going to begin to charge dealers with violations and fine them.

It doesn’t matter whether or not the consumer is “right” or “wrong.” Regulators are getting complaints and they have had enough. It’s worth repeating: It doesn’t matter whether or not the consumer is “right” or “wrong.” Regulators are getting complaints and they have had enough.

The FTC didn’t wake up one day and decide to send warning letters to 97 dealer groups for fun. In my opinion, the action was driven by customer complaints. Customers are having poor experiences at dealerships. For example, customers get upset when advertised prices that don’t match what they’re actually asked to pay. There are many recent examples,

It is not a coincidence that the Lindsay Automotive case was settled about three weeks after the March 13 letters. The FTC means business and this was their first example for all to see.

When a customer sees one number online and another number in the F&I office, that gap doesn’t just create frustration. It creates exposure.

Complaints turn into investigations. Investigations turn into enforcement. And suddenly, what started as “just how we’ve always done it” becomes Exhibit A.

Satisfy your customers. Every, single one.

Threat #2: Lawyers and Regulators

If customers are the spark, lawyers and regulators are the accelerant. The FTC has made it crystal clear: the price you advertise must be the price the customer pays including all mandatory fees. You cannot disclaim your way into a new price.

The FTC is demanding clear and transparent pricing. I have mentioned this in previous articles when mentioning their settlements with StubHub, LiveNation, Express Scripts, and a \$60 million settlement with InstaCart in 2025. This has been building for quite a while.

The FTC \$78.1 million case against Lindsay Automotive was based on alleged improper charges tied to deceptive pricing, unauthorized add-ons, and deceptive practices. Publicly, Michael Lindsay has said the math does not amount to \$78.1 million.

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Regulators are looking for patterns. If they see a pattern, they act. Your website hygiene has never been more important than it is right now.

Threat #3: Other Dealers

Dealers have not fully considered this problem. On April 17, the FTC had a webinar to clarify some of the rules. During that conversation, the FTC Director of Consumer Protection, Chris Mufarrige, encouraged dealers to turn in other dealers who are not following the rules: *(Take a moment to review this portal if you've never looked.)*



For decades, compliance risk came from customers and the government. Now it comes from across the street. Chris Mufarrige encouraged dealers to turn in their competition if they are not playing by the new rules.

Let's assume the FTC doesn't react to these submissions (which I think they will). Dealers have not considered the Lanham Act of 1946. Now, it will quietly become another accelerant (i.e. a modern weapon) as one dealer can sue another for false or misleading advertising.

If your competitor believes your pricing gives you an unfair advantage because it's not fully transparent, they don't have to complain. They can sue. This is no longer just about compliance.

The Convergence

Individually, each of these threats is manageable. Customers complain. Regulators regulate. Competitors compete. But

together? It's a lot. A customer complains. A regulator investigates. A competitor files suit. That's the new reality. That's the triple threat.

Conclusion: Redefining the Triple Threat

A "triple threat" used to describe someone who could do three things exceptionally well: run, pass, kick; or act, sing, dance.

Today, in automotive retail, the triple threat describes something else entirely: customers who can expose you, regulators who can penalize you, or competitors who can sue you. Three different skill sets. Three different angles. One unified risk.

So, consider becoming your own triple threat: in discipline, transparency, and consistency. That's what a robust risk and compliance program looks like.

Create a risk and compliance program. Audit it. Document it. Again. And again. And again. ■

About Tom Kline:

Contact Tom at (757) 434-7656 or at tomk@bettervantagepoint.com. Kline specializes in solving dealership problems through risk mitigation remedies, compliance, and dispute resolution (i.e. tucking in the tentacles). He is the Lead Consultant & Founder of Better Vantage Point, Tuck The Octopus, and AlwaysDoBetter.com and has worked with both publicly-held and private dealerships. Kline routinely speaks at national conferences, workshops, 20 groups, presents webinars about risk transfer and risk mitigation topics & techniques, and routinely provides expert witness testimony to defend dealerships. Kline also writes for seven publications and has multiple trade group endorsements. Thanks for seeing things from a Better Vantage Point, where "We Get You Out of Trouble... and Keep You Out of Trouble."

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Mike Molino RV Learning Center College Scholarship Program



FACT SHEET: 2026-2027 ACADEMIC YEAR

ABOUT THIS SCHOLARSHIP

Made possible through the generous support of the Kindlund family, the RV Learning Center College Scholarship reflects Newt and Joanne Kindlund's commitment to supporting the next generation of RV industry leaders. Each year, one undergraduate student receives a \$5,000 scholarship. Eligible applicants include rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors pursuing degrees in business, finance, economics, accounting, or other RV industry-related fields. Students who are currently working in the RV industry, have a family connection, or aspire to enter the field are encouraged to apply.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS*

Applicants must:

- Be a rising sophomore, junior, or senior pursuing an undergraduate degree
- Be enrolled in or accepted to an accredited four-year college or university
- Be majoring in a field related to the RV industry (such as finance, business, economics, accounting, or similar areas of study)
- Maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0
- Demonstrate an interest in or connection to the RV industry, either through current employment, family connection, or career aspiration
- Show a commitment to contributing to their educational expenses
- Submit a FAFSA Submission summary or Student Aid Report summary page

**Dealer principals and their dependents are not eligible for this scholarship.*

APPLICANTS MUST SUBMIT:

- 01** A completed essay with 500 words or less outlining your educational goals, career aspirations, and connection to the RV industry.
- 02** An official transcript from the most recently completed academic year, showing a GPA of 3.0 or higher
- 03** A list of extracurricular activities, honors, and achievements. A resume including this information is acceptable.
- 04** A current headshot
- 05** FAFSA documentation and a short financial commitment statement
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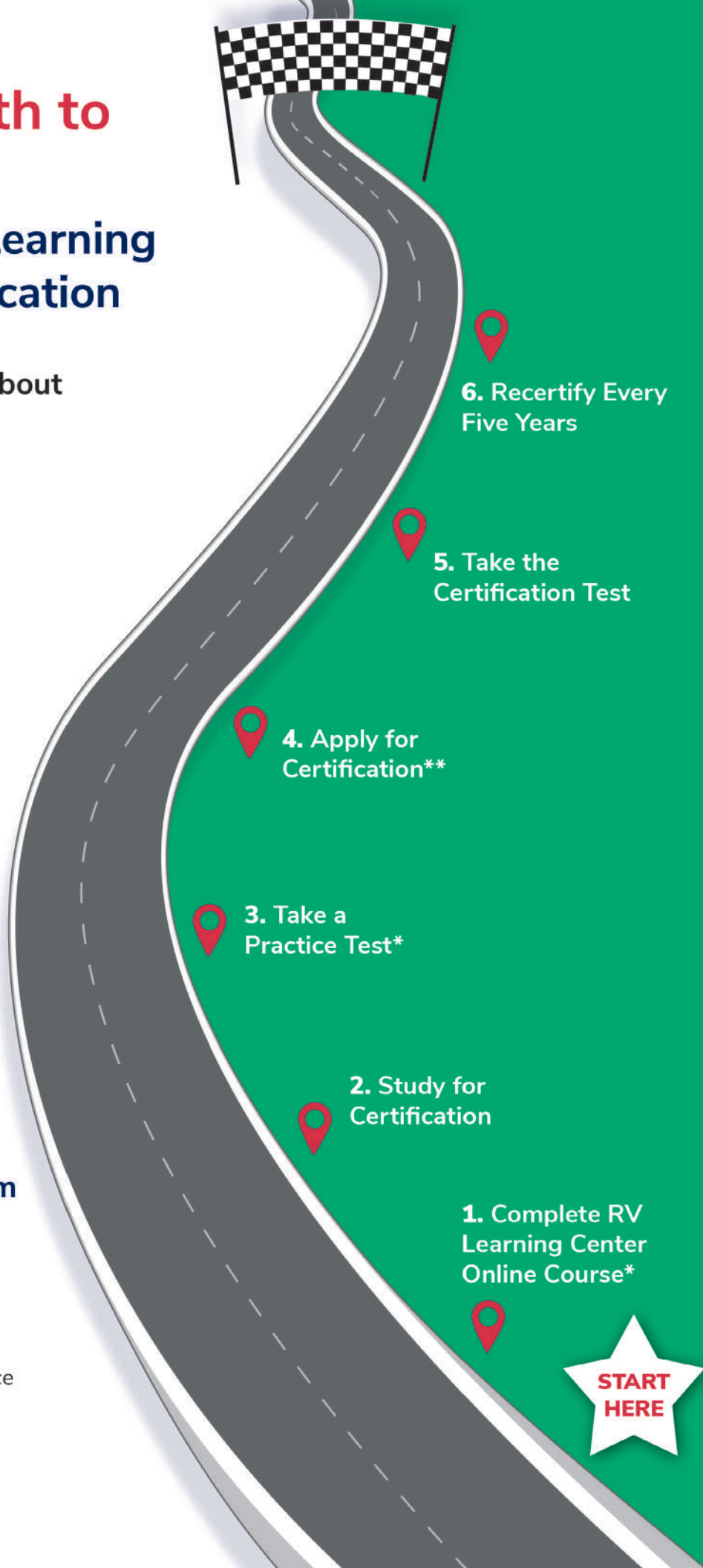


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8. Tom Stinnett **\$10,000**
9. Bill Fenech **\$10,000**
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Protective (JP)	\$23,543	\$546,471	Reines RV Center, Inc.	8,500	67,525
Brown & Brown Insurance (FR)	26,666	200,001	Wilkins RV (JBS)	10,000	58,000
	Lifetime Pledge:	200,000		Lifetime Pledge:	58,000
RVAC	25,000	152,000	McClain's RV Superstore	4,000	57,000
Tom Stinnett (BH)(CS)	10,000	137,900	Curtis Trailers, Inc. (DP)	2,500	48,500
Bill Fenech	10,000	102,500	Pennsylvania RV & Camping Association	10,260	49,440
Wave Express	75,000	100,000	Higginbotham Dealer Services (JP)	500	31,700
	Lifetime Pledge:	100,000	Alpin Haus (DP)	1,000	27,000
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	Lifetime Pledge:	10,000	Beckley's RV	500	3,750
Tom Manning & Associates	1,000	9,500	Dinosaur Electronics	200	3,400
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Keepers RV Center, Ltd.	250	2,000	Newt Kindlund (CB)	1,000	1,000
Icon Technologies Limited	500	1,750	Deborah Brunoforte (CB)	1,000	1,000
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Mike Molino RV Learning Center LEGACY DONATIONS

Contributions have been made to honor the following individuals:

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To make a donation to the Mike Molino RV Learning Center, visit www.rvlearningcenter.com

RVDA RESOURCES

RVDA Help Desk & Solution Center:

This program, administered by RVDA staff, will offer help and resources to assist RV dealers for a wide variety of dealer concerns. In more complex business-related cases, the dealer inquiry will be forwarded to Better Vantage Point who will provide expert support (up to one hour), at no charge. Dealer members can contact the Help Desk & Solution Center via: www.rvda.org, email: info@rvda.org, text: (227) 254-8890, or phone: (703) 591-7130, ext. 113.



College Scholarship:

The Mike Molino RV Learning Center's Scholarship program encourages deserving college undergraduates to apply for the annual college award of \$5,000. The program provides financial assistance to help foster the next generation of industry leaders.

Therefore, an important factor for awarding the scholarship is an applicant's background of RV industry employment or a desire to work in the RV business after completing college.



Learning Center Online Courses:

Service writer/advisor, parts specialist, parts manager, warranty administrator, and service manager online courses provide a pathway to certification for fixed ops dealership personnel and serves as a training resource for experienced professionals. These courses help RV service and parts personnel increase efficiency and reduce Repair Event Cycle Time (RECT) within the RV industry.



SPOTLIGHT: Morgan Stanley "Second Opinion" Financial Planning Service

The RV Assistance Corp. (RVAC) partnership with The Stanek-Haack Group at Morgan Stanley provides access to a complimentary, Second Opinion Service which offers efficient financial planning strategies to minimize tax obligations, optimizing business and personal debt, exit planning, wealth preservation, and where appropriate, charitable giving. For more information and to schedule a no-obligation meeting, visit advisor.morganstanley.com/the-stanek-haack-group#rvda or call (800) 621-5231.



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