

# Supporting The Independent Dealer

Story & Photos By Shari LeGate

In these fast-paced times, dealers are often caught in a quandary: "Too busy doing business to do business." But there are occasions when it's important to stop conducting regular day-to-day business to learn what can best increase long-term business.

The annual Freedom Group's Retailer 3S Mini Grand event is one of those occasions. In August, the Freedom Group's family of companies converged at the World Shooting Complex in Sparta, Ill., to spend quality time with their dealers. The Freedom Group family of companies includes Remington, DPMS/Panther Arms, Barnes Bullets, Bushmaster, Parker Gunmakers, Dakota Arms, Advanced Armament, Marlin, EOTAC, H&R 1871 and Mountain Khakis.

"This event was developed as a way to get dealers to sit down with us, to understand our products, to understand who we are and handle our products in a setting that's not SHOT Show, NASGW or in

their stores," said Scott Blackwell, Freedom Group chief sales officer.

The first day of the two-day event was comprised of presentations and discussions in classroom sessions, which featured products from Remington, their many licensees and other Freedom Group brands. It was an opportunity for dealers to talk one-on-one with the people who make and know the product. The second day, dealers headed to the range to shoot guns and test ammunition.

Chris Cole, merchandise director for AcuSport, displayed exclusive Remington guns dealers can buy only through AcuSport.

"We appreciate the fact the Freedom Group supports the independent dealer, and we want to give the dealer the opportunity to shoot those guns. It's important to us the dealer has an opportunity to try the product — and this is one of the few events where that can actually happen," Cole said. "Any kind of production educa-

tion is beneficial for dealers, and any information they glean is going to help them sell the product better."

For more information on AcuSport's exclusive Remington products, visit [www.acusport.com](http://www.acusport.com).

## Better Your Business

Zach Roach and Mike Phillips from Paducah Shooter's Supply in Paducah, Ky., spent time talking with reps.

"There is so much good information available," said Roach, gun buyer at Paducah. "It's a lot of hands-on time, versus other events, where you see the guns and handle them, but don't actually go out and shoot them. This isn't just a sales pitch. It's learning information so you can sell your product and better your business."

Phillips, Paducah gun salesman, concurred.

"You get the information from the guys who are building the products we're out there selling," he said. "It's coming straight from the horse's mouth. When you receive information like that, you're confident you're passing along what customers need to hear."

"Plus, you're getting face time with the people you talk with over the phone every day, building business relationships, putting a face with a name," Roach added. "You're doing the networking that helps build better business down the road. You get a wealth of information here that's really hard to come across anywhere else."

Al Rothweiler, owner of Mid America Arms in St. Louis, Mo., has attended all three 3S Mini Grand events.

"I come every year to stay on top of what's new, to better understand what's different, and to pick up more knowledge to take back to my employees to build and go forward," Rothweiler said. "The biggest



Dealers had the opportunity to test products and ammunition, and ask questions, for a complete hands-on experience.

benefit here is the knowledge gained. The Freedom Group has expanded, and has a lot of other lines we may not have done much with before, but which are now readily accessible to us. Here, I can see what's new from the Freedom Group, and know I can get it on a timely basis for my customer. The chances of losing the sale are a lot less."

First-time attendee Randy Glauber, from Glauber Sports in Carrollton, Ky., made the most of his time at the event. Glauber is the third generation to run the 5,000-square-foot family business.

"We carry so many items in our store; we know a little bit about all of them, but probably not enough about any of them," Glauber said.

Glauber knew which guns he wanted to shoot during the second day of the event.

"It means a lot to the customer when you tell them you actually tried something. I had a few things on my list I wanted to try, and now I can go back to my customer and say, 'I tried it, and here's what I think of it,'" he said.

"Without a doubt, I'll be back next year," Glauber continued. "We should all try more of the things we sell. It absolutely translates into more sales. I won't lie to a customer. If they ask me if I've tried it, I'll tell them. They like what we like. Customers want to trust the people they're buying from. They respect what we do. They can't afford to try all the products, so our opinions really matter."

### **Believing In Dealers' Business**

Not only do dealers' opinions matter to customers, they matter to Freedom Group executives, as well.

"This industry, as many industries are, is deep in 'if we build it, they will come,'" Blackwell said. "The great consumer product companies of this world have a different approach: They focus on what the consumer wants. A true consumer goods company listens not to itself, but to its consumers. We want to spend more time out in the field, finding out what our consumer wants."

The 3S event is a strictly dealer-only event. The big-box stores are not invited.

"It's important for us to spend time with the independents," Blackwell said. "I can't make it out to 500 dealers every month. But here, I can spend time with them, learn about their business, and let them know that somebody at my level believes in their business, wants to really hear what they have to say, and will make the changes."

Attendance was down a bit from last year, which is a challenge Todd Pearson,

director of sales for the Central and Western regions, is focusing on.

"It's essential we let our dealers know the importance of the 3S event. Not only how it helps them, but us, as well. We

*"This isn't just a sales pitch. It's learning information so you can sell your product and better your business."*

know they're busy running their stores, especially this time of year. Next year, we plan on four to five of these events in regions around the country, making it easier for dealers to attend," Pearson said.

Blackwell spent the majority of his time on the range talking one-on-one with

dealers, and can't stress enough how vital the independent dealer is.

"If we have one dealer come away from this event feeling that Remington is actually listening to them, we've been successful," he said. "An independent retailer is an entrepreneur. He's running his own business. Quite honestly, pre-2007, Remington was not overly dealer-friendly, and one of the things we try to do is emphasize to our dealers that we can't forget about the independents. They're the ones going belly to belly, across the counter with customers every day. These guys know the business, and we have to rely on them to make Remington a better company."

*For more information on the 2011 Freedom Group Retailer 3S Mini Grand schedule, visit [www.freedomgroupshoot.com](http://www.freedomgroupshoot.com), or contact Kevin Winscher, Central Region Sales, at (314) 954-5723. ©*



*Scott Blackwell (right), Freedom Group chief sales officer, talks with dealers about their needs on the range.*



*Dealers packed the classroom sessions, discussing marketing strategies, sales techniques and product points with reps from the Freedom Group family of companies.*