

10 of the

RV INDUSTRY'S HOTTEST SALES

SHOOTERS

and owners prosper.

At the same time, to be completely fair about it, *Shooters* in our definition are also moral people for whom the closing of a sale isn't always the end-point of that transaction. These individuals are consummate pros who are respected by their peers, detailed in their transactions and dutiful in their communications. They build long-term, mutually beneficial, business relationships with their clients. And, of course, they can be found in most any corner of the American recreational vehicle industry, a sales-driven arena that employs sales professionals in critical roles in the manufacturer, supplier, distributor, manufacturers' rep and retail ranks.

With that in mind, the *RV Business* staff set out this past summer on a particularly difficult mission – trying to identify 10 polished individuals among the hundreds of candidates who might qualify as so-called *Shooters*. And although we weren't trying to establish any sort of "Top Ten" ranking for anything as unquantifiable as sales expertise, our mission proved to be a true Mission Impossible in many respects from the outset because there's so many candidates, companies and politics involved.

Several corporate CEO-types, in fact, told us that they really weren't inclined to help us recognize their best salespeople in their companies out of concern that those individuals would soon be hired away by other employers.

There's probably some truth to that.

Adding to the difficulty of the

By Dave Barbulesco
and Jeff Crider

A Look at How the RV Sector's Leading Front-Line Sales Pros Use Talent, Passion, Expertise and Plenty of Shoe Leather to Keep the Products Moving

Shooters. It's a word you'll not find in the dictionary, at least not with the definition we're thinking of in this pre-Louisville Show issue of *RV Business*.

No, the Shooters we're talking about are top-notch, front line, salespeople around the industry who have the natural, God-given business acumen to smell out and close up a sale with mechanical efficiency – much to the benefit of their employers and their own personal financial welfare. They're not the vice presidents and owners of their companies, but the rank-and-file soldiers of sales through whom those managers

challenge was the fact that we knew darn well that there would be plenty of truly esteemed sales professionals with relatively quiet demeanors who would be worthy of inclusion but probably wouldn't come to the forefront because of the simple fact that they don't make a lot of waves and garner a lot of time in the spotlight. Those people are included in this editorial package, *Shooters: Ten of the Industry's Top Sales Professionals*, in spirit only.

In the final analysis, however, we make no apologies for this editorial presentation, despite the obstacles. In fact, we feel



NAME: Damon Rapozo
COMPANY: Guaranty RV Centers, Junction City, Ore.
POSITION: Sales
RESPONSIBILITIES: Selling entire product line as top national salesman for Country Coach Inc. over the past four years.
TENURE: Eighteen years in the industry, last seven in sales, last three at Guaranty

we've assembled a roster worthy of our original goals and worthy of review in any U.S. business journal. For, in the final analysis, these individuals serve to remind many of us of just what it takes to succeed in the business world in general in this day and age.

Although their backgrounds vary, by the way, there are some commonalities among the salespeople we interviewed. Unsurprisingly, they always seem to outwork their competitors and, often, their own peers. They're schooled – well informed – about their products and services. They're perceptive, family-oriented and seem to truly enjoy people. Equally unsurprising among a group as naturally competitive as this is the fact that several of them, especially the men, seem to rank golf high as a diversion.

It's an interesting bunch. And a deserving group, worthy of recognition as members of the industry's elite.

Shooters.

GUARANTY'S RAPOZO:

KEEPING THE HUMAN TOUCH
IN LARGE-SIZE DEALERSHIP

Despite growing up in the alluring backdrop of his native Hawaii, Damon Rapozo decided early on that his future was on the mainland.

After graduating from high school, he left Honolulu and traveled to Minnesota. "My grandparents were there, and they afforded me the chance to work in their family business, Noon's RV Center," he said. "I was young and unproven, so they hired me as a wash boy. I cleaned and prepped motorhomes for delivery."

Over the next two years Rapozo worked as a service technician and warranty writer before finding his niche in sales. "I worked the sales end of the business with my uncle, Darrell Noon, and grandfather, Vernon Noon, at my side," he related. "They were my mentors. They taught me the most important thing in sales was to listen to people."

The family business was sold in 1994, and a few years later Rapozo began mapping out his next career move while working for new management. "I started doing research on what I refer to as 'the Big Four Mega-Dealers,'" he recalls. With the list soon narrowed to Guaranty RV, Rapozo moved his family to Junction City, Ore., joining the Guaranty staff in October of 2002.

Today, he added, Guaranty owner Shannon Nill maintains the atmosphere of a small family-run business while also offering the advantages of a larger operation. "We have the best and most consistent management team in this business," he said. "The processes and systems they have in place are amazing and smooth."

Another advantage is working within minutes of the home manufacturing plant of Country Coach Inc., a high-end coach builder for whom Rapozo has been the top salesperson for the past four years, first with his former dealership. "Coming to Junction City was the right move for me," he said.

Just like that move nearly 18 years ago from his native Hawaii.△

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