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What’s Your Mission For 2017?

A new year always means new resolutions, and at most businesses, it also means new budgets and strategic planning. You know the drill: revenue, costs, profit — what’s the bottomline?

But within the active lifestyle industry, there’s increasingly another line item that’s moving to the top — the company’s mission.

Perhaps it was amidst the recession that many companies seemingly lost that viewpoint — it was tossed aside in some merger or private-equity takeover. Some corporate suit looked at some event, job or philanthropic endeavor, saw little return on investment and cut it out the budget, thinking no one will notice.

But someone noticed. The consumer.

They saw it, too, at the places they worked. The widening income gap, the jobs shipped overseas, the lack of care of a brand they used to believe in. Say what you will about the recent election, but it was a response … for better or worse.

All politics aside, the active lifestyle industry, perhaps more than any other, is leading the return of mission-driven businesses — see Patagonia’s decision to donate 100 percent of its Black Friday sales ($10 million) to environmental nonprofits, the countless start-ups like Tom’s that are building philanthropy into the business plan, or the rise of B Corps that legally allow businesses to put the best interest of people and the planet before profit.

In this issue you’ll read about the benefits of giving back and the mavericks of the industry that found their mission to shake things up. For it’s not just conscious consumers who are moving the needle, but conscious employees and entrepreneurs that demand companies with a cause.

Their inspirational stories give us hope that the pendulum is swinging back — that we do what we do for the mission over the money. ■

David Clucas
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The Big Shift

The industry’s traditional seasonal calendar has been upended by changing consumer buying habits, retail strategies, weather patterns, product cycles and trade-show schedules. In which direction should brands and retailers go? By David Clucas
n November 2016 … The thermometer read 70 degrees throughout much of the country. Retailers were hawking fleeces, puffers and winter boots. Vendors were taking next winter’s orders before the first snowflake of this season ever fell. And the industry’s trade shows were leapfrogging their future summer and winter trade shows into the spring and fall. All the while, consumers were still back-to-school shopping.

It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to assess the situation — the active-lifestyle industry is out of sync.

In what’s largely been a rush to reduce risks and costs, the industry has lost one of the most valuable business tools — flexibility. That’s especially needed in a predominantly weather-dependent winter. To put it another way, instead of properly layering for adaptability on a cold-weather hike, we’ve stubbornly put on nothing but an expedition-weight parka and barreled out the door determined that snow will appear when we want it to. In reality, we’re destined for a sweaty, chill-inducing, miserable experience.

Why? Aren’t we smarter than this?
To diagnose and begin to solve the issue, the industry must come to terms with some new realities, including big shifts in consumer shopping habits, retail strategies, weather patterns, product cycles and trade-show schedules.

Shifting Consumers
The ultimate driver of all change is the consumer, who is rapidly moving ahead — whether the industry chooses to catch up or not — thanks in large part to the technology at their fingertips.

“The customer is becoming accustomed to on-demand everything,” said Mike Massey, owner of Massey’s Outfitters in Louisiana. “Uber, Airbnb, OpenTable … they’re all about providing services and products at the last second. Why should people expect anything different from retail?”

To that end, Massey and many other industry retailers and brands — from The North Face to Deckers Brands — are reporting what’s being called the “buy-now, wear-now” trend. Simply put, consumers are purchasing products closer to their time of need. They buy winter jackets when it gets cold, instead of planning ahead in September when the products typically start hitting retail shelves.

The shopping strategy, while nerve-racking for retailers, is a boon for consumers. First, it gives them great flexibility — a must for today’s on-the-fly society. Shoppers can wait to see if it ever gets cold, or if their friends decide on that ski trip or not. Better yet, when the consumer is finally ready to make the purchase, the jacket is likely on sale after sitting on the shelves for months. And there’s no fear in finding the right size and color — the entire internet is their stockroom.

There’s nothing but upside — consumers have been trained to wait.

Even with something as sure as the back-to-school season (you can guarantee kids are back in the classroom by early September) students and their families are delaying their purchases. Why? To wait and see what the other kids are wearing, of course. Then they can choose the right styles to buy on demand.

Even for retailers effectively filling that demand, the reality has come with significant extra costs, particularly in logistics — constantly shifting products across the country, not to mention the environmental costs of all that transporting. Massey said. To help with some of those logistics, Massey formed Locally.com, a growing service helping match consumers’ online demand for outdoor goods with local store inventories. That’s one advantage local brick-and-mortar retailers have: Some consumers are delaying their purchases to the literal last minute, meaning they can’t wait for online shipping — they need to find a local store that has it now.

Shifting Retailers
Retailers are reacting to consumers with shifts of their own.

“They’re placing fewer orders in advance of the season, and instead are preferring to make in-season orders once they have a clearer read on seasonal trends,” said Dave Powers, president and CEO of Deckers Brands. “Retailers can no longer fill their stores in late August or early September with fall product and expect to sell-through their assortment if the weather is warm.”

“It’s less pre-season and more in-season,” Massey echoed, adding that the same strategy goes for which products are hitting the retail floor. “We used to bring out the skis as early as July; now, it might be as late as January, depending on the weather.”

Retailers are also learning to shift merchandising strategies, beyond just always lowering the price. That comes thanks to growing consumer databases — albeit a big investment — paying off in the form of targeted marketing campaigns with the right incentives at the right time for the right customers. Getting a handle on inventory data will help, too. If a retailer knows that a 2016 running shoe model is low in stock nationwide, there’s little reason to discount it. Even if the 2017s are around the corner, someone will prefer the 2016 and seek it out. The airlines have figured out supply-and-demand pricing — so should we.

Shifting Vendors
Vendors and brands are beginning to react to shifting consumers and retailers, but it’s been a slow process. The big problem is that up until now, brands have been pushing hard in the opposite direction.

The realities of overseas manufacturing have created a juggernaut of long lead times and earlier wholesale order deadlines. Concept-to-shelf times run more than two years in some cases, frequently falling out of touch with current consumer demands and fashions.

In response, a new niche of Made-in-the-USA brands and techniques are flourishing with greater flexibility and reduced production times, but the segment is still a very thin slice of the pie. New technology and machinery, plus new trade
policies, may soon ramp up U.S. and made-in-market manufacturing, but in the meantime, brands are eyeing broader strategies to stay relevant.

One answer comes in the form of “rolling launch strategies outside the traditional calendar,” said Eric Greene, general manager for Exxel Outdoors’ Performance Outdoor Group. The idea is that brands will push outside the boundaries of just launching product on the spring/summer and fall/winter timetable.

Powers at Deckers echoed the move: “Brands must design and develop year-round product, improve the way they forecast and plan their inventory and optimize their development calendar so it is as close to market as possible,” he said. Even Deckers’ Ugg brand, typically worn when the weather is colder, is shifting to expand its year-round product, Powers said. “Today we release product multiple times a year and offer a more diversified assortment.”

Shifting Trade Shows

While consumers and retailers are moving closer to in-season schedules, it’s curious to see the industry’s major trade shows moving the other way. It suggests that brands aren’t quite ready to give up on their push for earlier order deadlines.

In November 2016, Outdoor Retailer announced it would move its annual summer and winter trade shows up nearly two months — Summer Market to June, Winter Market to November. The shift literally moves the shows out of their respective seasons — into spring and fall.

The move was inevitable as the trade shows saw more of their attendees conducting business at earlier events such as Grassroots. A global peer, the OutDoor show in Germany, moved its summer show to June as well. It’s all a response to those long lead times in manufacturing, said Darrell Denney, executive vice president of Emerald Expositions, which owns and operates the shows in conjunction with the Outdoor Industry Association.

“Sourcing internationally has become more rigid,” he said. So has pressure on company managers to get orders in. “In the past, even two years ago, the directive was to have 70 percent of orders in before production. Now it’s 90 percent,” he said. “Everyone is looking to reduce risk.”

Outdoor Retailer Show Director Marisa Nicholson acknowledges that retailers are pushing back against the earlier order deadlines. Still, she said, earlier trade shows can provide both sides better intel and feedback, even if those orders come down the road. “The one thing retailers can agree on is that it will be nice to see the entirety of the industry in one place when they are making decisions,” she said.

There are still fractures when it comes to the trade shows. While Emerald officials said they opened discussions to other players, such as the Snowsports Industries Association and paddlesports groups, representatives for both said meetings were more directive than discussion oriented.

“One glass of wine to tell us ‘here’s what we’re going to do’ is not progress,” said SIA President Nick Sargent. “There has to be a real desire to achieve a solution that’s in the best interest of the entire industry.”

Shifting Seasons

Ultimately, Mother Nature may have the biggest shift in store.

There’s little debate that a warming planet presents big challenges for the industry. But there’s less discussion around the many forms of climate change, including what seems like winters that come later in the season.

Our colleagues at SSI Data, powered by SportsOneSource, have noticed this trend in the retail sales figures. While total winter jackets sold will always be the greatest during the weeks leading up to Christmas — snow or not — the biggest unit sales bumps (versus the average) over the past few years have come after the holidays, during January, February and March … even April. You don’t see the change as much in dollars, because most all cold-weather product is discounted by then, but it proves earlier points that consumers are waiting for the cold to hit and getting good deals to boot.

Which brings us back to the traditional seasonal calendar. Winter doesn’t officially begin until December 21 and it doesn’t officially end until March 20, yet we expect two feet of snow and sub-zero temps the day after Halloween. Or we crow if it isn’t beach weather by March 1.

Perhaps the best shift we can make is moving the holidays to February.
Get Ready For A Big Shake Out in 2017

More than 20 industry executives share their thoughts on where we’re headed next.

By David Clucas and Thomas J. Ryan

I

f 2016 proves to be the pivotal year for big change in the active lifestyle industry, 2017 will represent the big shake out.

That’s the sentiment from more than 20 active lifestyle executives SGB spoke to for its annual economic industry outlook.

While a few more retail bankruptcies are a possibility in the new year, the survivors are on board with a new paradigm, largely focused on an omni-channel approach that looks to deliver products, information, experiences and services to consumers no matter when and where they shop.

Much of that business will be online — ask a room full of people where they last spent $100 or more on a product, and you’ll get the same answer — but just as crucial will be a redefining of brick-and-mortar retail. Local stores — both third party and direct-to-consumer — will need to serve both as convenient product delivery centers and, more importantly, a local hub for real-life brand experiences and events that can’t be matched online. Local marketing and merchandising budgets and partnerships will need to swell.

As for the sports and activities themselves, the industry is bullish, and rightly so. Health, wellness, fitness and the outdoors remain extremely popular and fashionable. What’s changed is that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of new ways to recreate beyond the traditional core activities, and each slice of the pie is getting thinner. The answer for some brands and retailers will be to diversify — acknowledging the CrossFit, Yoga and Mud Run crowds — while others will be just as successful hyper-concentrating on their niche.

Perhaps the biggest question for 2017 is, where will all the extra inventory from the bankruptcies and warm winters go? Retail sales figures, at least from those still standing, suggest that demand remains high for active lifestyle products, particularly with an improving economy. But can the industry react quickly enough to shift product to the right channels?

Throw in a new U.S. President and significant shifts in trade policy, plus rising interest rates, and 2017 will keep us watching.

Our outlook for the team industry is that those companies positioned for growth, with a strong technology, nimble supply chain and the ability to scale, will continue to expand market share in 2017 and beyond. Concerns: The political environment and general volatility around it can always make for nervousness in both financial and business markets. Rising interest rates, which can impact consumer spending habits, should be a concern. Potential
trade wars with China and other countries that may impact pricing or availability of goods and services should be a concern for all parties dependent on merchandise not manufactured exclusively in the United States. —Adam Blumenfeld, CEO, BSN Sports

As we look forward to 2017, we are relatively optimistic that the outdoor market will regain traction after a volatile 2016 Q3 and beginning of Q4. We continue to see opportunity and growth in our footwear and apparel categories in the coming year, but are closely watching the winter-specific market gets through the excesses created due to managing inventories tightly, particularly as the new product initiatives. Lastly, we will continue to approach to 2017 can be expected. We believe that the excess inventory situation will continue to impact the market in 2017 by putting downward pressure on prices and restricting cash available for purchasing additional inventory. It is likely that most brands will be conservative with their 2017 inventory commitments. While this should be a positive offset to the current excess inventory situation, it also has the potential to limit the upside retailers have in chasing business driven by seasonally “cooperative” weather patterns and/or positive changes in consumer spending. —Brian Thompson, GM, ExOfficio

While cautious, we are optimistic that 2017 will be an improvement over 2016 for sporting goods brands and retailers. Specifically, we believe a combination of last year’s unusually mild early winter, retail bankruptcies, weak retail foot traffic, the presidential election and a strengthening U.S. dollar all weighed heavily on 2016 financial performance for many companies. Additionally, the “Amazon effect” has continued to hurt undifferentiated retailers, and we expect the pain to accelerate for those particular participants. Heading into 2017, we do see the potential for overall conditions to improve. Simply put, even though current conditions are not ideal, the lapping of easier comparisons as well as tighter inventory management should help to improve industry growth metrics. The caveats to our optimistic 2017 forecast are around those brands that will have to continue to deal with a strengthening U.S. dollar and the U.S. trade policy dynamics under President-Elect Trump. The uncertainty around U.S. trade policy is already hampering certain M&A transactions in process right now, especially those that are heavily exposed to foreign manufacturing. As for the M&A market, activity was down substantially in 2016 compared to 2015, albeit against a strong comparison. That said, strategic and private equity cash reserves remain at record highs and M&A appetite for brands continues to be quite strong. Interest rates will most likely increase, but by historical standards, borrowing will remain inexpensive and debt will continue to be plentiful. These factors, combined with the likelihood of improved industry growth, should lead to M&A activity equal to or possibly greater than in 2016. —Brian Rowe and Michael Smith, Managing Directors, Investment Banking, D.A. Davidson & Co.

What runners are buying, where they are buying and how they are participating in the sport of running are all changing. But despite all this change, the brands and the retailers that will flourish are the ones that focus on the runner and delivering products and experiences in a convenient, unique and authentic way. The core of every sport starts with running and although recent figures show the number of runners in the U.S. declining over the past two years, there are still 48 million runners that run weekly. We know that there are millions more people that don’t consider themselves runners but are actually running a fair amount. Whether in group classes or cross training, running remains an important part of their lives. Therefore, at Brooks, we believe speaking to these people through our performance products is key to growth moving forward. Although the performance run market has been slow over the past few years, we believe that performance products remain timeless to active people. —Dan Sheridan, Executive VP & GM, North America, Brooks Sports

Expect even more aggressive competition between various channels, including retailers prioritizing house brands and brands prioritizing direct-to-consumer. The landscape is changing and key relationships may be challenged. Brands will have sales concentrated with fewer retail channel options. This may be good for large established brands, but could be more challenging for newer/emerging brands. Innovation in both the manufacturing process and the further integration of technology and activity will drive a new product pipeline and opportunity. Short-term, the market will be relatively stagnant in the U.S. depending on the segment, with significant growth opportunity in international markets for those with understanding of penetrating local markets. —David Kinzel, VP, One Source Risk Management & Funding

We are cautiously optimistic that 2017 will be a rebound year for the golf industry. This year we’ve seen some unprecedented consolidation on the retail side in a tough overall sales environment. As we turn the calendar to 2017, we believe our industry will be able to bounce back with positive momentum. There are some very exciting new products coming in early 2017, and the young guys on The PGA Tour continue to inspire and engage with golfers of all ages. —Dick Sullivan, President & CEO, PGA Tour Superstore

Long-term running participation rates remain a concern. Not only have we seen race finishers steadily decline since 2013, but organized youth sport participation is waning as well. The long-term health of our industry is directly linked to the long-term fitness of future generations, and right now it appears this trend is moving in the wrong direction. Future trade wars and currency volatility are also concerns. There is a certain level of uncertainty with any presidential transition, and this year is no exception. However, the tone and rhetoric of the president-elect toward trade has us watching this new administration’s moves very carefully. We are hopeful cooler heads prevail, but we will be building some safeguards into our financial models. More optimistically, consumers are open to more brands than ever before. A decade ago, consumers chased brands; now brands pursue consumers. The power of the internet has flattened the world and made the niche mass. We’ve moved into an era of inclusion and collaboration where consumers use brands to tell their own story. While this means the competition is fiercer than ever, we are excited by the opportunity to introduce new consumers to our authentic brand. We are
also excited by the intersection of performance and lifestyle. Asics is and will always be a sport performance brand, but we love finding new ways to inject our technical expertise into new and innovative products. — Gene McCarthy, President and CEO, Asics Americas

Unfortunately, 2016 was not a great year for some active lifestyle retail chains. From my perspective, I think the bulk of the business will move to the remaining brick-and-mortar stores and their own online channels. The movement to shopping online through both third party e-commerce retailers and direct-to-consumer channels will continue to grow as an overall percentage of sales, but the loss of retail brick-and-mortar locations will not be the driving force fueling the e-commerce sales growth. — Greg Thomsen, Managing Director, Adidas Outdoor USA

The running industry is certainly going through a significant shift, and it’s a critical time for us to think bigger, smarter and more innovative. Our stores have felt the results of excess reduced-priced product flooding the marketplace this year, and I’d expect that to continue into 2017. At the same time, Amazon is changing the game for everyone and we can’t ignore its impact or the way it has changed how customers explore and buy products. It is forcing our vendor partners to make some really hard distribution decisions relative to managing brand integrity versus volume. Data shows that running is cooling off a bit, but we remain very optimistic that running will always be a core fitness activity. We’ve watched the growth of CrossFit, boot camps, mud runs, Spartan runs and non-traditional races that provide a new type of experience versus the standard 5K. We’re putting a lot of resources and focus on understanding how we can best incorporate new and emerging technology into our in-store experience. We’re also investing in a strategy that broadens our training programs and incorporates new ways to participate. We’re working with our vendor partners to deliver unique products and opportunities for our brand that customers can’t get elsewhere. We’re also continuing to evolve the way in which we communicate and connect with customers through digital platforms and the online store experience. — Jeff Phillips, President & CEO, Fleet Feet Sports

RW Baird has a bullish outlook based on increased R&D spending, reduced U.S. political uncertainty, a more favorable regulatory environment, reduced tax complexities and continued expansion of global affluence. All of this combined should drive product and business model innovation and increased entrepreneurism. Also, collaborations between industry actors not only help deliver innovative new products, but direct-to-consumer and "last-mile" customer service models that expand customer accessibility, convenience and overall participation rates. Canyon.com and Velofix are two examples in the bicycle category, but similar dynamics are playing out in other industry
verticals. Our biggest concerns would include market and/or foreign political black-swan events. —Joe Pellegrini, Managing Director, Robert W. Baird & Co.

While the tennis industry is facing some challenges at the moment, particularly when it comes to a flat or declining equipment market, there remains optimism about the opportunities in front of us. For instance, as we move into 2017, there is a collaborative push by the industry to promote the health, fitness and wellness benefits of this sport. Recently, Dr. Jack Groppel was named the new health & wellness advisor for the tennis industry, and he's in the process of assembling an advisory task force to better connect tennis with mainstream thinking about health, wellness and wellbeing practices. From an industry perspective, we've stepped up our educational outreach of those in the tennis business with important conferences and webinars, along with expanding the Tennis Industry Association's Tennis Owners & Manager Conference next March in Orlando, FL. There is also an emphasis on expanding Professional Tennis Management programs at colleges across the U.S., led by the new USTA University. Tennis participation, which has seen minor gains in recent years, is poised for more rapid growth as key programs and collaboration by the USTA and other groups help to reach into high schools, middle schools and elementary schools, along with new offerings for adult recreational tennis. — Jolyn de Boer, Executive Director, Tennis Industry Association

It's snowing and it's cold just in time for holiday shoppers to decide what they want to buy their loved ones who like to be outdoors in winter. Second, the economy is growing overall; unemployment is down, GDP is up, consumer sentiment is up and consumer spending is up … which is all good news for an industry that relies on disposable income. If weather and economic conditions remain good, we could have record sales in the snow sports market. There is a lot of pent-up demand in the East after last season's feeble winter and the West is still stoked on snow. — Kelly Davis, Director of Research, SIA

Now that the presidential campaign is over, we are looking forward to industry opportunities that may be presented as a result of the political change. There are certainly questions that will remain unanswered until after the new year, some of which we asked last year – will manufacturing jobs return to the United States so that our economic engine generates future customers for our products? Will the tax climate change in a way that encourages Americans to invest in sports, health and lifestyle improvements our industry can deliver? What will our industry competitors face with respect to labor costs and health care costs, both of which have the potential for derailing successful companies? While there are certainly issues of concern going into 2017, we believe there could be a possible adoption of the PHIT bill in the upcoming year, but it will likely not happen in the lame duck session. A similar analysis applies to any legislation pertaining to the sales tax fairness issue. There may be some movement on the issue given President-elect Trump’s emphasis on small business. —Matt Carlson, President & CEO, National Sporting Goods Association

We expect that the firearms industry will continue its long-term growth trend in 2017, as it has for the past 20 or so years under both Republican and Democratic administrations. But we think it will do so in a more normalized market against a more stable political backdrop with fewer of the periodic spikes in demand that have occurred when law-abiding consumers perceive that politicians are seeking to enact restrictions on their ability to purchase the products they want to buy. —Michael Bazinet, Public Affairs Director, National Shooting Sports Foundation

The coming year could be challenging for the outdoor industry. However, challenges can represent opportunities for the right company. I expect that if there are additional bankruptcies in the retail sector this will put additional pressure on other outdoor brands. In addition, consumer brands will need to work harder to gain resonance with customers in the face of increasing competition in product choices. Increasing competition may lead to M&A activity in the industry, with both strategic and financial acquirers seeking assets that will help them reach new markets and broaden their customer reach, while leveraging successful business practices and talented operators. —Nathan Pund, Managing Director, Lazard Middle Market

The retail environment is a bit challenging with all the bankruptcies and ongoing consolidation. Retailers are also struggling as consumers change their buying habits and how they look for product. As far as the year ahead, one challenge is there will be a lot of closeout inventory in the marketplace. There’s going to be some really good running shoes at some aggressive prices. Eventually, that inventory is going to flush out. So I’m pretty optimistic about the second half of the year when all the inventory should be cleared and retailers are going to be prepared for the business that will come. Overall, I think it’s a fascinating time for the industry because the consumer has allowed us to bring some real innovations to the marketplace. The consumer is also looking away from some performance looks and definitely toward some lifestyle looks. Luckily, many performance models have morphed into more lifestyle designs. —Patrick O’Malley, President, Saucony

The outdoor industry is clearly in the midst of a massive generational change: ownership, leadership and consumer. Out of this transition, opportunities will arise for brands to connect to the evolving outdoor consumer. —Rick Meade, President, Nikwax

As a nearly $70 billion industry that impacts approximately two million American jobs and creates $55.6 billion in annual wage income, golf has experienced its challenges but is healthy and thriving. 2.2 million people tried golf for the first time in 2015, the most since 2.4 million in 2000. We are seeing large numbers of new audiences being introduced to the game through non-traditional venues such as Topgolf, but also through the success of our industry’s growth-of-the-game initiatives such as The First Tee; Drive, Chip, Putt; PGA Junior League Golf; LPGA-USGA Girls Golf; and Get Golf Ready. 2016 was historic for the industry with four first-time men’s major champions, golf’s return to the Olympics after a 112-year absence and Team USA reclaiming the Ryder Cup. We believe that we will continue this progress in 2017. —Steve Mona, CEO, World Golf Foundation

Last season proved to us that where it snows, people participate. This bodes well for our industry. We’re also undergoing a changing of the guard in many important roles throughout the industry. From the new SIA President to the new CEO of PSIA, along with other influential positions among buying groups and suppliers, our industry is benefitting from new relationships being forged with a positive outlook and willingness to work together. It is fair to say, the world has changed a lot in forty years. We are finally catching up. The
bankruptcies of 2016 will play into the current buying season. In some areas, specialty snow sports retailers will pick up some business and become healthier. However, that can only happen once the glut of inventory has passed. My real concern from the bankruptcies lies in the lack of exposure snow sports will have in those locations. Regardless of the product mix or the level of service these many storefronts provided, we have lost tangible opportunities to inspire young people to want to try skiing and snowboarding. — Teddy Schiavoni, Chairman Elect, National Ski and Snowboard Retailers Association

After a year of massive disruption marked by bankruptcies and consolidation, the industry will likely navigate slowly forward in 2017. As inventories become leaner, we envision moderate overall growth, but uncertainty around the future may limit consumer spending. Obviously, the direction of the new Trump administration and action on trade, regulations and employment will play a critical role in economic health and consumer confidence. In terms of critical trends, developments with intelligent manufacturing will continue to compress the time and distance between brands and the consumer. We believe we will see breakthrough technologies sooner rather than later. Sensor technology, especially with smart apparel, will shift the fitness tracking category. — Tom Cove, President & CEO, Sports And Fitness Industry Association
Where Will All The Inventory Go?

Following the significant retail bankruptcies in 2016, including Sports Authority, Sport Chalet, Golfsmith and others, industry executives were unanimous that a flood of extra inventory will hit the market. So where will that inventory go with 20 million square feet less retail space on the market? We put the question to executives, then averaged the results:

42%
Third-Party Brick-And-Mortar Stores
(including their e-commerce business, eg. Dick’s Sporting Goods, Cabela’s, Academy, etc.)

37.5%
Third-Party Online-Only Sales (eg. Amazon, Backcountry.com, Fanatics, etc.)

20.5%
Direct-To-Consumer Sales (including online and branded stores, eg. Nike, The North Face, Lululemon, etc.) What do the results tell us? From the perspective of industry executives, a majority of the inventory isn’t returning to the traditional route of retail. Rather, a combined 58 percent is expected to head to online-only or direct-to-consumer channels. It’s a telling sign of the shift that largely sent the retailers to bankruptcy in the first place.
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It's become expected for outdoor brands to have a social responsibility strategy integrated into their DNA. The outdoor consumer is increasingly cognizant of where its money goes, so it makes sense for companies competing for those dollars to take note as well. But the reasons to contribute time, money and visibility to a cause don't end at the bottom line.

For companies focused on outdoor recreation, attracting the best talent requires more than a competitive salary and benefits. Active, socially conscious employees want to feel like they're doing something besides marketing and selling a product, and employers are increasingly happy to oblige.

Whether it's using part of their proceeds to sponsor cleanups or partnering with a like-minded non-profit, these companies operate under the inescapable fact that in order for consumers to have a reason to purchase outdoor apparel and gear, there has to actually be an outdoors. In addition, a more responsible company is a more visible company in the eyes of hyper-conscious outdoor enthusiasts. Just ask Patagonia, which pledged to donate 100 percent of its Black Friday sales to environmental nonprofits, leading to $10 million in purchases on that day.

All of this is contributing to a desire to engage potential customers by connecting with them on a deeper level. Companies can trust that a growing number of consumers, if given a choice between buying a sweat-wicking baselayer that helps protect wildlife and one that doesn't, will choose the latter and feel great about it. They may even drop a little more of their cash if the cause – rather than the price – is right.
Barking Up The Right Tree

Trade shows like Outdoor Retailer present a rare opportunity to match up big, energetic dogs with active, outdoorsy owners. Dog gear manufacturer Ruffwear took note of this and learned that apparently, there’s nothing better than a pack of friendly pooches to draw people into a booth.

At the adoption events, conducted in partnership with Best Friends Animal Society, Ruffwear pays the adoption fee and also covers the cost of transportation. For Ruffwear Brand Manager Greg Freyberg, it’s a no-brainer: the company wants to help and the dogs need homes. Why wouldn’t they do it?

“Sometimes you can’t even get into our booth because there’s so many people wanting to see the dogs,” Freyberg said. “It’s becoming quite a success because people come to the show knowing Best Friends is going to be there with us.” And like all the brands exhibiting at the show, Ruffwear and Best Friends bring a carefully curated selection, so if someone is considering taking home a hiking buddy, they’re more likely to find a match.

When asked about whether the company’s efforts have a direct effect on customers choosing Ruffwear over another brand, Freyberg admits, “It’s hard to say. You want your good intentions to result in action, but we don’t do it to attract consumers. Honestly, it’s just the right thing to do.” Lots of companies make leashes, so in the end it’s up to the person making the purchase to make a conscious choice.

The human component at Ruffwear is on board with supporting the company’s efforts to give back. “People come to work for us knowing that this is what the company is about,” said Freyberg. And the value-added job benefits of being able to bring their furry friends to work and getting together for group outings to the off-leash dog park aren’t the icing on the cake; they’re pretty much the whole meal. “It comes with the territory” when they apply for the job, he said. “They expect it.”

Plenty Of Fish In The Stream

A canine companion is optional for hiking, but for Scott Fly Rod Company’s customers, a healthy fish population is absolutely essential. That’s why the producer of high-quality custom rods joined Trout Unlimited’s efforts to protect Colorado’s Alpine Triangle in 2010.

“I think people who have experienced the incredible places fly fishing takes them become advocates for healthy ecosystems,” said Scott Fly Rod Company President Jim Bartschi. “We support conservation efforts both close to home like the Colorado Alpine Triangle project or restoring minimum flows in the Dolores River below McPhee Reservoir, to ones farther afield like the effort to protect critically important fish and wildlife habitat in Alaska’s Bristol Bay from the Pebble Mine project, or restoring freshwater flows into the Florida Everglades from Lake Okeechobee.”

In addition to protecting fish and their habitats, Bartschi also takes care of his team members. “We structure our work schedule to integrate with our passions, so we operate from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. to take advantage of Colorado’s outdoor activities,” he said. “That, plus ‘doing what we love,’ keeps new talent flowing and encourages veterans to stick around for more than 20 years in some cases.

But no matter how many rods Scott puts in the hands of new anglers, if there’s no fish and no stream, the outdoor industry loses an activity that’s strongly associated with being in nature and the promise of contemplative solitude. As Bartschi puts it, “Access to healthy clean watersheds is the lifeblood of our sport and business. We want people to feel our passion for these places and take that away with them.”
A Drop In The Bucket
Mountain Safety Research (MSR) was founded in 1969, but the idea for MSR Global Health didn’t arrive until after 2004, when the company responded to a tsunami in Southeast Asia by supplying water treatment devices to victims. “We took a bunch of backpacking equipment and shipped it over, and this was stuff that we felt was the best in the industry for the backcountry,” said MSR Business Development Manager Patrick Diller. However, it quickly became clear to MSR that water treatment products designed to be tossed in a backpack for a multi-day hiking trip translated imperfectly to disaster situations. “They weren’t big enough, their functionality wasn’t quite right – we had all these issues,” he continued. “Employees just wanted to help. That was the biggest donation we’d ever done, but we really didn’t know anything about the developing world.” Instead of letting the experience sink the company’s fledgling aid efforts, it tapped into its core design and engineering principles to come up with viable solutions. “They weren’t big enough, their functionality wasn’t quite right – we had all these issues,” he continued. “Employees just wanted to help. That was the biggest donation we’d ever done, but we really didn’t know anything about the developing world.” Instead of letting the experience sink the company’s fledgling aid efforts, it tapped into its core design and engineering principles to come up with viable solutions.

“We decided that since we have the know-how and the resources, we should really use it to fix these problems and create products designed to help people get what they need,” said Diller. As MSR’s various partnerships matured, organizations got what they needed, the company got valuable R&D funding and field testing, and most importantly, people who needed clean water got it.

Diller makes it clear that MSR is a for-profit company that develops and sells products, not an aid organization, but he also acknowledges that the outdoor industry has “very conscious consumers” that want to feel good about what they’re purchasing. “When customers learn that our company is also involved in bringing clean water to people in remote villages, they get excited,” he said.

Copper Straws
Philadelphia-based outdoor brand United by Blue was created in 2010 with an in-house conservation program – for every product sold, it pledged to remove a pound of trash from oceans and waterways. Since then, its cleanup team has facilitated 176 cleanups in 26 states, from illegal dumpsites to local parks. “We do it because we feel a responsibility to protect these spaces,” said United by Blue Content Marketer Kara Solarz, adding that “as a for-profit business we often have more resources and flexibility.”

When the United by Blue team is out getting soggy, cold, hot or gross on a cleanup, they’re also on the lookout for ideas that they can turn into innovative commercial products. Because they frequently find shards of plastic straws, they developed a practical copper version. The company’s desire to replace disposable goods with durable ones is constantly being reinforced by the physical act of picking up discarded grocery bags, plastic utensils and water bottles. As Solarz sees it, “Since we all attend cleanups … we all see a direct connection between our work and the mission of the business.”

What does the brand get in return for its sweat and effort? “Since we rely on volunteers to conduct almost all our cleanups, they frequently double as marketing outreach for us,” explained Solarz. “We also find that cleanups are the perfect opportunity to partner with brands who’d like to get involved with our conservation efforts.” And perhaps the team also gets a bit of fun and diversion, judging by Solarz’s list of cleanup oddities: “We’ve found a $30,000 check, a college diploma, eight handguns, a hazmat container, and a startling amount of underwear.”
The popularity of responsible brands continues to grow, "particularly with millennials," Solarz observed. In order to court that valuable consumer group, more companies would do well to "start measuring environmental impact metrics alongside financial metrics," as United by Blue does. It's a way to avoid the harmful optics of seeming like a soulless corporation, with the added perk of not being one in reality.

**More Bikes, Fewer Bottles**

Vista Outdoor, a global designer, manufacturer and marketer of outdoor consumer products, has upped its conservation game in the past year. By acquiring CamelBak, Jimmy Skyks and the Bell, Giro and Blackburn brands, the company indicated it was moving beyond its shooting-sports roots to target outdoor recreation consumers. It opened its new headquarters in Farmington, UT in August 2016 with an eye toward sustainability, at the same time launching its Conservation Counts program.

"We knew our brands were doing some great work in the conservation arena, but we wanted to unify those efforts into a single campaign," said Ryan Bronson, Vista Outdoor's director of conservation. By expanding its capacity for environmental stewardship, the company hoped to be able to make a greater impact but also "differentiate our brands at retail."

The natural backdrop of Farmington – nestled against the Wasatch Mountains north of Salt Lake City – is meant to inspire employees and provide a reminder of the importance of preserving wild spaces. Vista installed showers and a secured bike storage area "to encourage employees to bike to work," said Bronson, and added water-refilling stations to discourage the use of disposable plastic bottles. The latter initiative chimes with subsidiary brand CamelBak's "Ditch Disposable" campaign. According to Bronson, "employees – both at headquarters and across the company – have really embraced it."

Like many of its outdoor-industry brethren, Vista Outdoor can boil its decision to actively pursue conservation to a clear, simple reality: "If we want to stay in business for the long term, we need people to keep enjoying the outdoors in vibrant and accessible places," Bronson observed. The company stands as one more example of an emerging truth – in this business, the line between profitability and social responsibility is fading, perhaps into eventual non-existence. It's up to the industry – and its consumers – to determine what that will mean for the future.
Do you know what happens to that jacket you throw out when the zipper breaks? Or where damaged gear goes after it's been returned to the companies that made it?

In an age of fast fashion, brands are churning out new styles more and more frequently — four seasons have become a dozen. As these mass-produced clothes also become more affordable, consumers are attracted to buy more and cast off the old.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, 15.1 million tons of textile waste was generated in 2013, of which 12.8 million tons were discarded into landfills — but Nicole Bassett, together with business partner Jeff Denby, created The Renewal Workshop in order to change all that. We sat down with Nicole earlier this year to learn more about how she plans to take on waste in the outdoor apparel industry.

Tell us about The Renewal Workshop. What does the company do? The Renewal Workshop takes discarded clothing and turns it into renewed apparel, material for upcycling, or feedstock for recycling. It's a zero-waste system that extracts the full value out of what has already been created. We partner with apparel brands and retailers to source all of their unsellable returns and excess inventory. We sort it into renewed apparel, which is clothing that has gone through our cleaning and quality repair process, where it is then certified, co-branded, and sold direct to consumers at www.renewalworkshop.com; and into materials for upcycling or feedstock for recycling.

Where did the idea for The Renewal Workshop come from? Having worked inside the apparel industry for my entire career, one always asks themselves where does all of this stuff go? There was growing interest in the apparel industry, especially the outdoor industry, to find solutions for the products that they make, but the options out there were limited. I imagined what the ideal solution would look like and figured it would be worth creating it.

What did you do before starting The Renewal Workshop? Were you always interested in sustainability? Originally I thought I wanted to be a filmmaker, but I always had a passion for the environment and the outdoors, and I learned that one could have a career in business protecting the environment. So I went back to school and got a Master's degree in environmental studies and business and had the chance to start my career at Patagonia working on social and environmental responsibility in the supply chain. From there, I spent the past 12 years working on social and environmental sustainability for companies like Patagonia, Prana and Specialized Bicycle Components. My goal was to figure out how to evolve a company to become more responsible.
Nicole Bassett, together with business partner Jeff Denby, created The Renewal Workshop.
You’ve had to build a factory from scratch — what has that process been like? Highs and lows?
Myself and my Co-Founder Jeff Denby spent most of our careers in factories all over the world, so understanding factory operations, production processes and flows was something we were quite familiar with. In fact, when we pitched this idea to people that was the part we kept saying was the easy part while everyone else couldn’t begin to think where to start in setting up a factory. I love working in manufacturing, I love seeing things get made and improving on operations, seeing opportunities to improve processes. So, I love coming to work and making things, but at the same time knowing that every time we make a product we are saving that product from being landfilled.

The lows are that everything takes longer than you would like, so it has been hard to want things to be a certain way yesterday and having to wait. The lows are the stress, this is a huge endeavor that we are taking on and there are a lot of things to worry about.

Was it important for you to have the factory in the U.S.? I started my career in apparel in the early 2000s, when a lot of business was going overseas. So throughout my career, people have always wished for more manufacturing in the USA. I wanted to build a factory here in the USA, but one for the future, not about bringing jobs “back” to America, but about designing new jobs for a new economy and we think that a remanufacturing company can do that.

What do you think are your major challenges/risks going forward?
Being a capital- and people-intensive early part of the year and then to grow into more traditional marketing campaigns and strategies.

What do you think is your dream for the business?
Our ultimate dream is to be able to support the entire supply chain for apparel at the end of its life. We are starting out with Renewed Apparel, but our goal long term is to support the infrastructure and innovation for upcycling materials and recycling feedstocks. Ultimately, the goal is to create an entirely closed-loop supply chain for apparel brands.

We know being an entrepreneur is time consuming and stressful — what is your favorite way to relax when you get the chance? I love being outside. I run, mountain bike and ski. Being active is the perfect balance to using your head all day to problem solve, so many different things going on. I also have a meditation practice that is incredibly important to me to help me balance.
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His Way
A Conversation With Two-Time Olympic Gold Medalist
Ted Ligety On How He Approaches Skiing And Business

By Nancy Bouchard, Ph. D.

Photo courtesy Alexis Boichard

Ted Ligety has what it takes. Whether it’s tearing down a slope at 70-plus miles per hour to win an Olympic Gold or running a successful company, Ligety brings talent, passion and the willingness to work harder than just about anyone at the table.

Ligety won his first Gold Medal at the age of 21 at the 2006 Turin Olympics. That same year he partnered with Carlo Salmini, a MIT grad and materials engineer, to launch the Shred (Ligety’s nickname) and Slytech brands, designed for the highly competitive eyewear and protective equipment fields. Now, a decade later, with another Olympic Gold Medal to his credit, five World Championships Gold Medals and five World Cup overall giant slalom titles, both the partnership and Shred/Slytech are thriving. The brands have new offices in a new location as of this winter, in Ligety’s hometown of Park City, UT. His role is chairman, with Salmini as CEO, and the company is making waves with its new line of protective gear that aims to hit not only the ski slopes of the world but the mountain bike category, too.

Shred and Slytech are notable for performance (who understands the importance of gear better than an Olympic athlete?), style (Shred captured market share within helmets and goggles by reintroducing neon into the categories) and a keen sense of humor and irreverence. The first Shred logo was a sketch of Ligety’s that he had Salmini clean up while learning how to use graphic design software. According to Ligety, the company had no business plan but plenty of ambition, vision and desire to make the products they’d always craved.

Ligety is known as a person who is not afraid of putting himself ahead of the curve. When FIS, the international alpine ski race federation, was trying to limit logo size, he made a black goggle strap cover that covered most of the Shred logo. He added a window allowing a peek at the bright neon logo, with the word
“Censored” in big white letters on top to comply with the rule while still voicing disappointment. He was vocal in his opposition to the same organization’s efforts to change the shape of GS skis, arguing that it was bad for developing racers. And he believed in the power of fun in the ski industry — something that has now paid off as a business venture as well.

It takes a lot to become an Olympic athlete. Malcolm Gladwell, in his best-selling book “Outliers,” says that in addition to talent, luck and a lot of other intangible ingredients, you need hard work — about 10,000 hours in fact. That’s a concept that is second nature to Ligety. He’s been skiing since he was two, and some would say he’s been trying to figure out ways to refine gear for nearly as long.

We caught up with Ted at the beginning of the 2016/17 World Cup Season and had a chance to talk with him about his career — both skiing and business.

When did you start skiing? I started at the age of two. My dad was from Connecticut and mom was from upstate New York and Indiana. They both skied, but didn’t do it regularly until they moved to Utah. They taught me on my own. I was in lessons after they got me up and running … they always joked that the mountain was my babysitter. But they were right. I started racing when I was 10. Until then, I was freestyle skiing with my buddies. I skied the whole mountain … we did jumps, straight lining mogul fields and generally terrorized the mountain all day.

Did you dream of becoming a ski racer as a child? I loved skiing from a young age and, like a 10-year-old basketball player wanting to join the NBA, I had dreams. Every little kid wants to be a professional athlete. I remembered watching Tommy Moe in the ’94 Olympics in Lillehammer when he won the Downhill and got Silver in the Super G. It was exciting. Skiing was my first love as a sport. I liked a lot of sports as a kid, but by high school, skiing was it. I was lucky to attend the Winter Sports School in Park City.

You stuck with ski racing after high school even when people said you should retire and go to college. Then you started a company when you were in the thick of training for World Cup events. Have you always been a maverick? In some ways I have been a bit of the rebel in both my ski career and in business. Shred was born out of the idea of rebelling against how the snowsports industry was segmented and how those segments were pitted against each other. And more specifically it was a major rebellion against how ski racing was marketed and perceived. The establishment in ski racing was and largely still is so entrenched in old traditions and afraid of fun. We wanted to be fun and wild, we wanted to be a company that embraced snowboarders, free skiers and racers that celebrated our shared similarities. At the time this was a bold idea.

Your path to the U.S. Ski Team was not quite traditional — how about your skiing technique? My skiing could be seen as breaking from traditional technique. I generally ski with far greater angles than other athletes, in that my hip is on or near the snow on almost every turn. Most racers try to trim distance to have a faster time, but to do this they would have to slide the top of the turn. I thought I could make up time by skiing a slightly wider/longer line but arc the whole turn, therefore carrying a higher speed and getting more acceleration out of the turns.

What tips do you have for the aspiring Olympic athlete? The most important thing for young kids is to have fun with it. And they need to work hard. But if you are having fun, then you will work hard. And if you work hard, it is fun.

What is your favorite ski event? Skiing-wise, giant slalom picked me. At first I was a slalom skier. GS is more similar to free skiing; it meshed well with my background of ripping around the whole mountain. I always had the ability to get big angles and lay it over hard. So it meshed with what I did well.

Do you have a pre-race routine? In the start gate, sometimes there is a place to get out of the snow and warm up, but not always. Generally, in the five to 10 minutes before I push out of the gate, I go through the course through my head, engrain it and then relax. When I’m on course I try to react instinctively as I’m going down the hill. I try to get my brain out of my body during the run.

Where is your favorite place to ski — anywhere in the world? I’m pretty biased for Park City. The skiing in Deer Valley is some of the best in the world, from groomers to ripping around in the powder. But a heli trip with a bunch of friends to Alaska or Canada is hard to beat.

What other sports are you involved with? I do a lot of mountain biking in the summer. Our ski team plays basketball and tennis. But I really love mountain biking, and it is a big part of the focus for Shred and Slytech. There’s really a natural correlation with ski, snowboarding and mountain biking.

Shred is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Take me back 10 years to when you founded the company. What was your thought process? Do you have a history in business? Carlo is a materials engineer. He was developing carbon fiber components and made carbon fiber shin guards in his garage. One of my teammates saw them and asked him about them. After I won the Gold Medal using them in the Olympics in 2006 in Torino, it was a big launch point for Slytech. Then we had an idea for Shred. When I started to ski, we weren’t just racers. We had twin tips and fat skis … but the brands were staunch and old school, and most picked their segments and alienated the other segments. I wanted to embrace ski, snowboard, freeride and anyone who loved getting out there with products that embraced all the facets of snowsports. We started July 2006 and by November had the first product. Carlo was taking a corner of his dad’s office in Italy and I used my garage in Park City. It was pretty cool and amazing … and neat to see where we are 10 years later compared to our competition.

How did you settle on neon for your flagship colors? It was neon from the get go. We wanted very loud, very bright goggles you could see across the valley. Neon colors are cool anyway, but they helped us stand out. And we were one of the first brands to really stand out from the crowd.

What skills did you bring to the table? I have always been a tinkerer with my equipment. I always liked to make things better — even with brand new gear. Carlo has an engineering background, and he is never satisfied and has an equal passion about always wanting to make things better.
The combination of the two of us really worked. The blend of skill sets has helped us come up with the protective side and functional side of equipment. We have a big engineering team now, which really helps us to be as good and safe as possible.

What is your favorite new technology for Shred and Slytech? I think the ShredWide technology is pretty amazing with our field of view. It’s a much wider field of view than you get with regular goggles. If you are in a tuck skiing and you have to tilt your head up higher, it is a disadvantage … both for speed and performance. All of our goggles have been designed with that in mind. A lot of goggles out there look like they have big lenses, but they don’t have the field of view that ShredWide has. For Slytech, NoShock honeycomb technology is pretty amazing. We put it into our back protectors and knee and elbow pads. It spreads the energy out laterally — and evenly. Our helmet rotational energy management system takes rotational energy from a fall and can soften that blow. And we can put it into helmets without adding volume to them, which is also a technical advantage. It protects from a lateral impact, without sizing implications.

Where in Park City are the new headquarters? I still live in Park City, but we had an office in New Boston, NH and Huntington Beach, CA. We felt it was time to have everyone under one roof so we consolidated our offices. My hometown of Park City is where we originally started, and a hub for snowsports and the mountain bike world. It is a great community.

Do any skills from ski racing cross over to business? I think the foresight I’ve gotten over the years. In ski racing, once you are at the top level, you are always trying to trail blaze new ways to be faster, and new ways to problem solve. And ski racing is a very independent minded sport, you always need to be trying something new and coming up with new ideas. Sports in general are a helpful background in business, especially a sports-related business, but ski racing specifically is pretty good for getting used to working hard to get better.

What are your goals for 2017? My goals for Shred and Slytech are to continue to get the word out there, and continue to build products of our dreams. We are really proud of our products and we are a leader in innovation. We want to be a leader in the bike protection category as well. Skiing-wise, I’d like to win more World Cups and races. We have the World Championships this year, so defending my GS title is a big goal.
“SHREDWIDE TECHNOLOGY HAS A FIELD OF VIEW MUCH WIDER THAN YOU GET WITH REGULAR GOGGLES. OUR GOGGLES ARE DESIGNED WITH THAT IN MIND.”

— TED LIGETY, CEO, SHRED/SLYTECH
began in 1934 with the construction of the world's first water-powered sawmill in New Zealand. The brand has since expanded to include a range of outdoor apparel for men, women, and children. Nau's focus is on creating products that perform admirably in a variety of scenarios — jackets that work at the highest alpine environs, but are just at home while walking the cobblestone streets of Europe. The brand has turned away from highvis branding on its products, leaning instead on its signature narrow rectangle zipper pulls and their overarching urban-centric aesthetic. Wear now and you're less a walking billboard than a member of a group of like-minded adventurers, sharing the same secret.

We sat down with Galbraith to help us understand some other elements that make Nau much more than just another apparel-maker.

What sparked your love for design? I grew up in the intermountain West living most of my formative years in Colorado and Utah. I was skiing at Alta when I was six years old and making regular trips to the high desert of the Colorado Plateau to hike, bike and climb. I spent all my free time immersing myself in skiing, rock and ice climbing, hiking, river running, mountain biking and exploring the backcountry of this amazing region. This provided the context and inspiration to create better clothing and gear to feed my passion for living a life in the outdoors and pursuing many activities with a minimal kit of gear.

Did you study design? What was your educational background? My education was in anthropology with a focus in Mid-East archaeology and art history. I spent several years living in Egypt and Israel and traveling in the Mid-East working on archeological sites and going to college there. Seeing how ancient cultures survived and adapted to their surroundings and what innovations and art they created influenced my design aesthetic. Their practical solutions and designs that lasted thousands of years also gave me historical perspective.

What inspired the founding of Nau? The main concepts that inspired Nau were the potential to make business more socially responsible and to create a product line that was more useful across the board: lifestyle, rather than the traditional focus on specific sport activities. In short, how could we responsibly make product that was versatile for an active progressive lifestyle and socially responsible?

Obviously, brands like Patagonia have worked “giving back” into their business model, but Nau's initial strategy — establishing brick-and-mortar stores that encouraged home shipment of products, baking a percentage of each purchase into a non-profit — feels unique. Can you speak to that? The main focus was involving the customer in the process. Most companies determine what they think is important and are not transparent where the proceeds go. By allowing the customer to choose where they wanted the “giving back” proceeds to go, we engaged them in the process and reminded them that purchasing decisions can make a difference. Giving the consumer the choice and transparency in what we were doing is key.

And what hurdles did that present? Mostly how to present the Partners for Change giving that was seamless with the buying process, but provocative enough to create a change in perception.

Since the initial launch you faced a sort of perfect storm in terms of the market. But you survived. How? Amazing people, being small and nimble and a belief in core values allows you to weather the storm.

And how has Nau — and your role — changed in light the different parent companies? In general, it has been the same challenge: how to express the values of the company in the ever-changing environment and stay true to your principles.

Do you feel like you’ve been able align to your original vision? What has changed? The original vision of Nau has remained, along with a core of creative people that work together to continue to express the vision of Nau. What we know to be true has not changed, though how we talk about it today in a fluid world has.

In your opinion, what do you think has been your most revolutionary design? I don’t think that there are only one or two styles that are the most revolutionary designs. The overall concept of designing the brand Nau is the most revolutionary
thing we have done: The provocative idea that sustainability can be aesthetically progressive and that technical performing gear can be wearable for more of your everyday life.

Are there any pieces you've thought of designing but haven't been able to? Yes, the idea of fabrics created from the waste stream, produced with completely sustainable renewable energy, with labor standards that allow a living wage, net positive to climate change, and a versatile, essential product that lasts generations. In short, something that is the total opposite to the trend-driven consume and discard consumerism culture.

And what have you seen — in any industry — that's blown your mind design-wise? Tesla, Organic farm-to-table food, 3D printing.

Nau has a strong DNA with environmental-first processes and natural/recycled materials. Has your vision had to refocus over the years when it comes to purity of process? No, we have only seen continued progress in what is possible and growing consumer awareness and demand for socially responsible clothing. Apparel is where the food industry was in the ’90s when organic began to move from food co-ops and niche to retailers to mainstream. We believe that the future for apparel will include the sustainable and socially responsible ideals that have changed the food industry, influenced holistic health care and demanded transparency in the supply chain.

Sourcing sustainable materials can’t be easy — but the rewards, like finding a place to resource down insulation from duvet covers in Europe, feel tangible. Walk us through some of the challenges you run into with supply chain and production. This is one of the main challenges we are focused on. From a life-cycle analysis perspective, the raw materials have the largest environmental impact in apparel production. Overall, the industry has been focused on making low-cost, trend-driven product that will only last a short time. The model of consume and discard, paired with overproduction and discounting, has had a disastrous influence on the environment and working conditions in the supply chain. The challenge to design product with sustainable materials and produce them in factories that meet labor standards is enormous. At every step the choices are limited and creativity
and networking with like-minded suppliers is key to success.

The recycled down is a good example of a creative solution. Working for three years to eliminate PFC’s from our DWR is another. Most of these breakthroughs take years of focus to commercialize, and the benefits of being a small, nimble company that will take calculated risks on new sustainable technology allow us to stay ahead of the game.

You’ve incorporated other brands into a curated kind of merchandise experience. How did this evolve, and how do you choose partners? We have always felt that meaningful change requires a groundswell of like-minded people that see the world differently and are committed to making change. Nau has always looked for those people and brands to incorporate into our business model when we could. Nudie jeans and Millican bags are two good examples. Nudie’s design philosophy of using only organic cotton and transparency in their supply chain makes them a perfect fit for Nau’s customers. Millican’s use of sustainable materials and a minimalist & essential design philosophy for their backpacks and bags fits well into a progressive, modern, mobile lifestyle. Collaboration and community that support the emergent ideas of responsible design has the power to change our broken model.

What does Nau’s business plan look like for 2017? And beyond? Global expansion is one of the main focus points. We have launched the brand in Korea for Fall 2016 and will be looking at other global markets in the future. Also a focus on third-party certifications in all areas of the supply chain to continue to strengthen the transparency and integrity of our supply chain. From a product perspective, we are expanding our offering from a fall-winter outerwear focus to include a full range of product that will address head-to-toe needs for 365 days a year.

What is Nau’s advertising strategy? Do you rely more on word of mouth, repeat business, magazine ads, social media? Over the last ten years, Nau has done a little bit of advertising, but it’s not really a big priority, nor something we spend much money on. Our focus has been, and will continue to be, on making personal, meaningful connections with our audiences. That means we put a lot of effort into our stores, social media, customer service and PR. We really believe that if someone can meet the brand, touch, feel and try on the clothes and hear about the thought and effort that went into designing and making truly sustainable and versatile clothing then they’ll be as excited about Nau as we are. Real endorsements from word of mouth via social has been key for us.

Do you consider yourself a “maverick?” Maverick is not a title I like. Too much ego and bravado in that. I see Nau as more of a provocateur or disruptor providing an alternative way of imagining what outdoor could mean, and a vision to expand the idea of an outdoor lifestyle beyond sport-specific activities to be more inclusive of urban style and sustainability.
Discover the secret to performance shoes that can pound pavement and rebound stride after stride, mile after mile, delivered by the category leader.

Power your next shoe with OrthoLite insoles—the secret to superior performance. Our game-changing X40 High Rebound foam formulation boosts the elasticity rating to over 40%, making it the only insole choice for shoes used in high impact activities.
Warm From Within
Baselayers for 2017 change their DNA with fiber breeding and fits that mimic a second skin.

By Jahla Seppanen

On the spectrum from mid-layers to underwear, it’s finally common knowledge that all baselayers matter. It used to be that consumers looked to outerwear for warmth, or skipped the thermo-regulating underwear and settled for long johns.

But true warmth starts from within.

SGB spent its winter checking in with the best names in baselayers (from brands to backcountry guides) to get a sense of what’s hot in the category for 2017, and how retailers should approach selling amid delayed winter cycles.

Hybrids
Fabric combinations have never been bigger, as even traditional all-merino brands are opting to infuse new fibers into their household blends. “Natural fibers, especially in combination with man-made fibers, is the dominating trend for the category in 2017,” said Herbert Kenzelman, CEO of Ergonomic Support System at the Falke Group.

It’s a bit of a Frankenstein approach, testing combinations that have never been married before and working toward something that is warmer, softer and easier to map across unique body types.

While Tasc Performance was early to the hybrids party with its blending of bamboo and wool fibers, Ibex Outdoor Clothing has joined the effort full force by infusing temperature regulation technology at the fiber and thread level. James Fisher, Ibex’s vice president of product, told SGB that its baselayers have also benefited from the blend of merino and Spandex. Meanwhile Arc’teryx is doing fabric hybrid mapping for improved thermal regulation in exactly the regions your body needs it. This has become a topic of interest as more consumers wear their baselayers not just to stay warm but to stay cool as well, all year round.

“It’s true, people tend to purchase more baselayers (especially merino wool) when it gets colder,” said Jeff Russell, founder of Ridge Merino, “but the great thing about merino is its natural temperature-regulating properties don’t reserve its use to winter. Baselayers are now spring, fall, even summer pieces.”

The inner circle of baselayer fabric developers will all tell you that the potential of hybrid fabrics is just getting started. The consumer response will be twofold: one half will get excited and the other half will get skeptical.

“I’ve always been doubtful when new fads make their way on the scene. I’ve tried them all and learned quickly it’s all a marketing ploy and the actual
products don’t work,” said Jeff Evans, expert Everest mountaineer, adventurer and physician assistant. “My welfare and life are at stake with a simple baselayer,” he added, citing hypothermia as the least of his worries if the fabric doesn’t perform. “But with enough pros continuing to value the efficacy of these fabrics, there will be more, better hybrids. And that’s something to get pumped about.”

Mapping
We touched on this trend as it relates to the strategic use of certain hybrid fabrics in particular body regions, but mapping is going beyond patches of fabric and into the overall garment cut. Although not a novel concept to apparel, baselayers have been somewhat neglected when it comes to extreme tailoring. It’s a bit ironic that our next-to-skin (NTS) pieces are less anatomically correct than our outerwear jackets, but designers have snapped to the fact that fit and cut can be meaningful, optimizing the power of a baselayer depending on a person’s unique morphology.

For adventurer Evans, it’s the single area where he would like to see improvement in the category. “The goal should be a customized, personalized fit where the baselayer mimics every movement I make, and doesn’t pull or become untucked.”

Consumers are more knowledgeable than ever about their system of layers, Fisher with Ibex told us, and they will be looking for more personally tailored pieces. “They spend considerable time prepping and planning a system from NTS to the shell. Intricately fitting each piece into the larger equation is paramount.” It’s like trying to wear a t-shirt over a sweater.

Des Price, creative director at MyPakage, which specializes in men’s active underwear, agreed saying, “people care a lot more about overall fit. This doesn’t just mean your waist size and leg length.”

Simple And Sustainable
People are perhaps shopping for baselayers differently because they themselves have changed. The conscious consumer is dictating sales with a strict checklist that involves quality and sustainability … and that’s before they try on the product. “People care where their clothing comes from, they care about sustainable business practices and responsible sourcing of materials,” said Russell with Ridge Merino — which sources its base and midlayers from certified-humane farms in Australia, and counts its brand as a member of 1% For The Planet.

Falke’s Kenzelmann points out that quality is becoming a major issue for its consumers, particularly in the areas of fabric sourcing and craftsmanship integrity. Given these new demands, products are coming out with a new air of simplicity. “The look is reduced and more elegant,” Kenzelmann said. “And this aesthetic means a sport baselayer is being used as a comfortable everyday garment. In this way, consumers themselves are also being economical.”

Prints
All-over prints still have a warm spot in the category, but we’re hearing from brands that printing capabilities are getting turned up to high heat. Fisher with Ibex listed photorealism, printing on multiple fabric faces and reflective prints as some of the improvements raising the bar. “Designers are having a field day,” he said, adding that even outerwear design is being dialed back for more attention to the look of layers below. “We’re starting to see baselayers becoming a fashion accessory as people wear them beneath jeans and shorts even to add a dash of personality,” said Price with MyPakage.

The all-over print theme of baselayers primes the category for kit selling, which will make a strong appearance on the retail floor (i.e. marketing a top and bottom as a set or merchandizing the retail floor to promote the simultaneous sell).

What look is out of style? Russell with Ridge Merino said it’s “the shiny, super-tight synthetic look.”

Retailers Rejoice
Since 2016 saw another unusually late winter, brands and retailers have left the panic stage of coping with the irregular cycle and gone into planning mode. There is now an expectation that pre-season business will lag until inventories clean up, then there will be a wave of re-ordering to meet instantaneous purchases once the weather turns sour.

Some perks about the category that have retailers smiling is that first, consumers are more willing to update their baselayer wardrobe every year since these products are at a more welcoming selling point than their big brothers in technical outerwear. And since people are driven by tactical allure, in-store sales allow them to touch, feel and try on the pieces that are increasingly being made exactly for their physique.

Kenzelmann at Falke did give caution, however, that “retailers should not start too early with reduced prices — consumers will get used to this.” And he’s right. Baselayers should not be simply sold away at a high discount or promoted as a giveaway. Especially since they’re getting so much smarter.
A rmed with a smart phone and weather app, today’s consumer is ready for what Mother Nature serves up … down to the minute.

That information, in conjunction with real-time traffic reports, restaurant reservations and social schedules, has created a highly flexible consumer who can adapt to get the most out of their on-the-go day.

What does that have to do with outerwear, you ask? Everything.

Because our lives were much more rigidly scheduled 20 years ago, if you planned to go on a hike on Saturday, by golly, you were going on that hike no matter the weather. That meant you tended to prepare for the worst with full-on insulation and/or bombproof waterproof jackets.

Today it’s a different story. If the weather app says your hiking day will be rainy, consumers can quickly put out the call to friends on social media — “change of plans, we’re doing CrossFit indoors instead.” Or maybe the forecast is calling for just a light drizzle — “no problem, let’s properly gear up and do a quick run at city park.”

The point being: Today’s outerwear — both in insulation and weather protection — has evolved to become more flexible to match modern consumer habits, beyond just being the warmest or most waterproof. In tandem, consumers want stylish pieces that are less techy looking and more adaptable to the full spectrum of their activities.

“Versatility is key when it comes to outerwear,” said Mike Joyce, president and CEO of insulation ingredient brand PrimaLoft. “Particularly with the continued growth of athleisure and the fact that the definition of the outdoor experience is becoming more inclusive – meaning consumers need apparel that they can wear hiking or biking up the mountain, then down to the coffee shop or bar later that day.”

Granted, there’s still room for the warmest, lightest, most waterproof-breathable techy jacket...
for those who truly spend multiple days in the backcountry, but it’s like shopping for an SUV — do I really need the outdoor-pimped Land Rover or Wrangler, or will the Subaru Forester do?

Active Insulation
Perhaps the biggest shift on the winter side has been the rise of the active-insulation category. Armed with those weather forecasts, improved footwear traction and fitness trackers prodding them to get in today’s miles, more active athletes are choosing shorter bursts of high-endurance cold-weather activities — be it running or skinning up the ski slope — versus an entire day out in the cold. Of course, brands could just reduce the amount of insulation and slap the “active” label on it, but the key here, from a true performance point of view, is how the new pieces are managing warmth with breathability. That’s specifically come in the form of new synthetic insulations that will maintain loft, breathe better themselves (eg. move moisture) and can stay encapsulated in more breathable outer shells or no shell at all. The latter is a point that synthetic proponents are pushing over natural down insulation, which needs a closed shell to keep the plumes from escaping.

“Jackets today are more about climate control,” said FA Design Founder and Chief Design Officer Freddy Ansara. “It’s not about a jacket that is extremely warm, but one that breathes really well.”

Softer And Stretchier
That extended range of breathability coupled with softer and stretchier fabrics (including air permeable waterproof-breathable membranes) also allows designers to think of outerwear more like they do a hoody or midlayer, said Michael Cattanach, global product director at Polartec. They become pieces that the consumer can keep on throughout the day, he said, rather than being viewed as emergency pieces of gear. “We want to get it to where people don’t know they’re wearing it.”

For rain and snow protection, that’s meant moving away from the boardy, crunchy technical looks of yesterday’s hardsheells, Cattanach said, adding that the hardshell and softshell categories have really merged into one. “Consumers want soft, quiet and comfortable shells,” he said. “They’re getting away from this idea of bombproof weather protection.”

Still, while comfort is key, admits Columbia Outerwear Director Hugo Debrueres, there are consumers who want the old-school, rain-slicker look with hardened protection on the outside and cozy layering on the inside. That’s the theory behind the brand’s OutDry jackets, which put the waterproof-breathable membrane on the outside versus the inside, preventing wet-outs or the need for durable water repellent chemicals (DWR).

Tracking Sustainability
Speaking of those DWR chemicals, also referred to as PFCs or PFOAs, the worry is that they are spreading throughout the environment with potentially harmful consequences. Most industry brands have now shifted to shorter-chain versions of the chemistry, admittedly only slightly less harmful and with the drawback of less protection. Expect to see more alternative solutions in the coming years, as big players such as Gore-Tex and Patagonia have pledged multi-million-dollar initiatives to address the issue.

On the insulation front, sustainability is also top of mind, particularly with natural down sources and animal welfare. The solution moving forward has been not only certification, but effective tracking of the down after it leaves the farm and works through the supply chain, said Matthew Betcher, creative director at Allied Feather Co. New technology allows suppliers to optically tag and track down all the way to the end-product on store shelves.

Sustainable down has become the outdoor industry’s point of differentiation, Betcher said. “We’re re-thinking how down is marketed,” he said. “In the past, it was just fill power and the bigger the better. Now, consumers are more engaged. They want to know where that down came from, too.”

Synthetic insulation brands will, of course, say they’ve got the solution to avoid down altogether. And they’re ramping up their environmental message, as well, increasing the recycled content in their fills. At PrimaLoft, the company’s goal is to have 90 percent of its technologies use at least 35 percent post-consumer recycled materials by 2020, Joyce said. And its top of the line Gold Insulation will switch to 55 percent recycled in 2017. Fellow insulation brand Thermore also introduces its 100-percent recycled fill called EcoDown this year.

If there’s one thing we heard time and time again from these ingredient brands, it’s that no matter the new insulation or waterproof-breathable technology, they’re looking for partnerships with consumer brands to build tailored products for today’s modern athletes, versus being just another supplier.

That bodes well for active lifestyle consumers, who are keeping an eye on the latest weather forecast.
The State Of Wool

The industry’s ‘original performance fabric’ is making a comeback with a bit of hidden science.

By David Clucas

As performance apparel brands rush to gain authenticity with coveted millennial consumers, many are eyeing natural fabrics as a way to exude the category’s traditional roots.

Wool, which is often dubbed “the original performance fabric,” has been a big benefactor of the trend. Along with its natural benefits of temperature regulation and odor control, the raw uniqueness of the material’s threads, knits and textures speak to today’s desire for one-of-a-kind items.

Yet the throwback for wool isn’t exactly 100-percent old school. Consumers are gladly accepting some hidden science in the natural fiber’s latest iterations — be it reduced itch, increased wicking or greater durability. These advances have made wool a go-to material in the outdoor industry and even some endurance categories such as run. But can it expand further? We took a look at the state of wool and where it’s headed next in active lifestyle.

Inside Out

Talk to a wool purist like Peter Duke and he’ll tell you — don’t mess with what nature gives you. The Co-Founder of Smartwool, who now runs merino wool brand Point6 after selling the former, is a big proponent of wool’s natural abilities when placed next to skin. Only there, Duke argues, can wool do its most important work — regulating the body’s temperature, whether it’s winter or summer. Think of it as the Goldilocks fabric — not too hot, not too cold … just right. Even in high-sweat situations wool is busy working, Duke said, both absorbing and expelling moisture without that clammy or chilled feeling that can sometimes accompany cotton or synthetics. While nylon is commonly used to help give wool products better structure and stretch, Duke re-iterates that the wool portion of a garment must always remain next to skin for the best performance. Then again, there’s another camp touting wool’s benefits, and they see the story inside out.

While performance wool apparel has resurfaced, and is undoubtedly less itchy than before thanks to the emergence of finer micron-level threads, not everyone is a fan of its feeling next to skin. Others say wool holds too much moisture and doesn’t wick fast enough. Hence the flood of wool/synthetic mixes in the market — some blending polyester or Tencel and wool threads in a total mix, others opting for a layer of synthetics on the inside with wool on the outside. The idea is that the synthetic fibers help wick away the moisture from the skin, then allow the wool to expel it. Plus, beyond performance, wool has become fashionable on the outside with its natural variable textures.

Duke and other proponents of next-to-skin wool argue against the synthetic invasion, saying most brands in the wool/synthetic game are just looking to cut costs and/or use lower-quality wool that’s too itchy to be placed next to skin. Meanwhile, Robert “Bernie” Bernthal, president of Duckworth, a wool brand made and sourced in the U.S., strikes a middle ground, offering both 100-percent wool and wool/synthetic mix products. “I think it largely
comes down to your activity,” he said. “If you’re going to sweat a lot, you need there to be a wick (synthetic) and a sponge (wool) to move the moisture.”

**Advanced Knitting**

There’s another reason for wool’s resurgence — the machines that knit the fiber have gotten a lot more advanced.

“These machines are really at the forefront of apparel-making technology,” said Timm Smith, chief marketing officer at Voormi. “They are able to knit in a much more three-dimensional way and we can control where certain fibers go for very strategic placement. If it’s a hunting vest, for example, we can knit in high-visibility fibers right next to the wool.”

The machines are also helping bring back production to the United States. Like Duckworth, Voormi is a sourced-and-made-in-the-USA wool brand, benefitting from more competitive — although still not lower than Asia — labor costs thanks to the machines doing most of the work. Plus, there are the benefits of keeping the process close to home and adapting on the fly.

“When you start bringing things in more locally, you do things a lot faster,” Smith said. “You don’t wait for those huge cycles and you’re a lot more agile.”

Those knitting innovations have helped supercharge wool for today’s consumer, too. With the technology, designers can now physically make wool tougher, said Cindy McNaull, global brand and marketing director for Cordura. That’s been the goal at the ingredient brand known for its durable fabrics.

“It’s not just wool, but cotton, too,” she said of the increased demand for natural fabrics. “The current style is trending back toward authentic, real fibers, but they want that comeback with hidden science, be it assisted wicking or durability.”

The durable wool story for Cordura isn’t just about the fabric surviving the outdoor elements, she added, it’s about sustainability and consumers wanting products that will last a lifetime versus having to throw it out in a few years. Wool has gotten so juiced up that it’s even being used in performance footwear, such as in a “Winter Wool” version of Adidas’ popular NMD Primeknit shoes, featuring knitted wool uppers.

### Responsible Wool

The wool sustainability story, particularly dealing with welfare for sheep, is top-of-mind for many brands with consumers that are growing ever more conscious.

In June 2016, the nonprofit Textile Exchange, after working with brands and retailers, released its first Responsible Wool Standard, or RWS for short. The voluntary certification process not only polices the well-being of the sheep and the land they graze, but then helps farmers and brands track the fiber post-farm to the product. “It’s tracking the entire supply chain so we can identify where the wool is coming from,” Duke at Point6 said. “It will weed out some of the companies that aren’t paying attention to sustainability.”

Brands like Point6 and Duckworth are also working to be more environmentally friendly by eliminating the chlorine chemical treatment commonly used in pre-shrinking wool. Different methods, from a mechanical solution at Duckworth to employing a plasma treatment (electronically charged gas) at Point6, are being experimented with to get rid of chemical use.

Finally, what about all those old wool sweaters and blankets riddled with moth holes or that have reached the end of their life? Smartwool has teamed up with an Italian company to recycle old wool and repurpose it into new knit fleeces. The fibers are color sorted, but still exhibit an imperfect aesthetic, said Paige Fink, the company’s director of apparel development and innovation.

“It gives it a more natural and organic feel,” she said, proving wool is not just resurging in the market; it’s re-incarnating itself, too.
The winter boot category got burned twice last winter. First, a mild weather led to poor sales and heavy inventories, further curbing buy-in going into the 2016/17 winter selling season. Compounding those issues were the closeouts that soon arrived after the bankruptcies of Sports Authority, EMS, Sport Chalet and others.

“Dealers have become very cautious about how they buy winter boots,” said Johnny Hawthorne, director of merchandising for footwear at The North Face. “They’ve learned that even when you have a great winter and your goods sell out, there is no promise that next winter will be as strong. They now buy with the intent to sell out and are willing to miss a few sales instead of carrying over or marking down inventory. We are in a risk-adverse environment and have to respond accordingly.”

With the warm trend continuing through early fall in many parts of the country, those overstocks lingered going into the Black Friday weekend, even with the conservative buys. Peter Sachs, general manager, Lowa Boots LLC, half-joked, “If it doesn’t get better soon, we may need psychiatrists at the winter OR show and not sales reps.”

Stock Up, Or Pare Down
The hope is that, as many climatologists are expecting, chilly weather will eventually arrive in the heart of winter to clear out shelves and even offer at-once opportunities for stores. But the at-once sales continue to shift the burden to vendors, who are being increasingly depended upon to hold the inventory. Said Mark Mathews, VP of sales at Scarpa North America, “It’s a fine line between balancing that demand with financial responsibilities.”

Suppliers have to decide whether to more narrowly stock insulated footwear to reduce their own weather risks, or carry additional fill-in supply to help stores chase if the weather cooperates. Adidas Outdoor, for instance, aims to stock 20 to 30 percent more inventory beyond its pre-season orders from retail accounts to cover additional at-once needs. Said Greg Thomsen, managing director for Adidas Outdoor U.S., “We have the benefit of servicing the entire U.S., so we can shift products and retailer needs to the areas of the country that need support, either more or less depending on the local weather conditions.” That’s a strategy that can pay off with a winter like last year in the U.S., when much of the East and Midwest were warm, but the West had a pretty normal winter.

Boots Lite
Amid the caution around insulated product, buyers still want to be in a better position to capitalize on any opportunities any spring-like weather may create. Balancing out the traditional insulated buys, stores are said to be looking for lighter, insulated and more athletic-oriented styles that can sell regardless of weather conditions. These include products ideal for seasonal-transition periods, particularly the early fall months with winter seeming to arrive later and later each year. Some are offering a much wider range of insulation levels to help manage the erratic weather. Buyers are said to be open to more non-insulated styles to support the not-so-rare warmer winter days.

The North Face is offering a range of casual boots and shoes that are waterproof, lightly or non-insulated and have a traction story such as Ice Pick, where the lugs get firmer and dig into the ice as it gets colder. New transitional, leather-based collections — meant to be be worn from late August all the way through the end of winter — are debuting as well. Said
Hawthorne, "While we want to provide winter versatility, we also want to be more relevant in the fall."

**Urban Outdoor**

While the weather hasn’t cooperated, lifestyle trends have, helping drive year-round interest in boots. Among the newer trends supporting multi-purpose boots are a greater number of younger consumers living in urban centers.

“Outdoor enthusiasts are moving into the city, living digitally connected lives and making physical fitness a lifestyle instead of a pastime,” said Nol Gerritse, Keen’s marketing director for outdoor. These outdoor urban dwellers are “opting to experience life outside differently” and seeking out gear that fits not only urban living but their wide range of activities.

The urban outdoor trend is also being complemented by an urban streetwear trend that similarly calls for more of a multi-functional approach to boots that’s based not just on snow, but cold. Said Lowa’s Sachs, “We need boots to sell even if there isn’t a blizzard. Also, those boots need to be able to be worn every day, not just snowshoeing or on the way to and from the ski hill.”

**Athletic Influence**

Athletic design has been a key influencer in overall footwear and that goes for boots as well, with new materials continuing to support ever-more-lightweight construction while still providing performance and protection features like waterproofness and warmth. Said Erika Derylo, Merrell’s marketing specialist, “Really it’s all about lightweight and grip. How do you take what has historically been a bulky, clunky category and turn it into something that is still protective, but that doesn’t feel like a brick on your foot?”

Consumers also often expect the instant-comfort of a cushy sneaker when slipping on their boots. On the upper, Gina Knight, Merrell’s active lifestyle design director, points to how “more modern and graphic pattern pieces” can be found on boots, again largely evolving from athletic inspiration.

Stretch fabrics are also becoming more common, notes Scarpa’s Mathews. At the extreme, consumers are looking for more of a winterized trail running model for running in the mountains, a trend that’s creating some opportunities for a hybrid trail/hiker with a waterproof external gaiter.

**From The Runway**

Color, prints and overall clean design on the aesthetic side have been supporting trends in winter boots for a few years. Lately, retro has been a stronger influence, particularly in high-end men’s boots. “These traditional-looking boots pick up on visual clues such as red laces and lugged soles but they don’t deal in performance features at all, so we see that as an opportunity,” said Oboz Sales Manager Christian Mason. He added that mixing materials — everything from leather to quilted wool — is still an important trend that makes footwear visually and texturally interesting, especially when combined with color.

Vasque is seeing a good response to traditionally built boot styles that are influenced by rugged outdoor hiking and mountain boots. Said Brian Hall, Vasque’s director of product development, "There definitely is a trend toward athletic winter styles, but also indigenous footwear function and design are making an influence.”

Merrell’s Knight continues to see a big trend in faux fur across a variety of silhouettes from cold weather boots, casual boots and even in more athletic inspired footwear. "Vintage snow boots and moon boot looks are definitely influencing women’s lifestyle products,” Knight said, “from ghillie laceing, nylon uppers, wide pull-on shafts to quilted uppers. Additionally, classic hiking looks in both rich leathers or technical mesh continue to be strong for both men’s and women’s casual categories." There is also a big push for handcrafted looks, she added, with a focus on natural leathers and hand-stitched details as well as crepe textured rubber.

**Grip Gaining Traction**

On the core performance side, being waterproof and breathable has become expected in a winter boot. Innovations such as Vibram’s Arctic Grip and a number of other advances in rubber technology, often coming from the auto industry, are making traction around snow, slush and ice a bigger story on selling floors. Adidas Outdoor is among those touting the benefits of different tread and lug patterns for varying terrain and weather conditions.

Warmth is also getting attention in some styles, including the use of wool linings as an alternative to synthetic fleece or shearling. Indeed, despite the erratic weather, avoiding frigid toes remains a primary selling point for many buyers. Said Lowa’s Sachs, “I think the only two performance trends per se are warm and dry. If a boot can do that for a customer, it wins.”
Winter Park’s mental skills coach, Stephanie Zavilla, explains how to banish psychological demons and recover with confidence this ski season.

By Carly Terwilliger

There’s a certain inevitability to ski injuries. Unless you learned as a kid, you probably spent your first couple outings in pain and discomfort. And even after years of hitting the slopes, there’s still the possibility of serious injury.

So what keeps skiers willing to come back after taking a bad spill? And how do they overcome the frustrations of recovery and the fear of re-injury? Mental Skills Coach Stephanie Zavilla of the Winter Park Resort Competition Center sat down with SGB to talk about the mental battle of recovery.

Zavilla, who holds a Master’s degree in Sport and Performance Psychology from the University of Denver’s Graduate School of Professional Psychology, has been with Winter Park’s team of about 1,000 athletes for four years. The biggest practice she preaches is that recovery really begins by differentiating physical and mental restoration. For instance, Zavilla spotlights ACL injuries as one of the most common, with a daunting physical recovery time of eight months.

“Yes, eight months is a long time, but in the beginning most athletes are pretty motivated because they get moving right away,” Zavilla said. “They think, ‘Yay, I’m doing something!’”

But it doesn’t take long for frustration and disappointment to set in. There’s often an attitudinal disconnect between the trainer and the person who’s actually going through the recovery. As Zavilla explained the process, “The trainer is going, ‘All right! You moved it a tiny bit more than last week!’ Meanwhile, the athlete is getting discouraged because you start to get bummed out by such incremental improvements.”

The Social Network

Most skiers are eager to get back to the sport as soon as possible, and not just for personal enjoyment or the thrill of competition. The inherent social aspect enjoyed on the lift or at the terrain park, which under normal circumstances can act as a stress release, is frequently overlooked when considering a recovery plan. When a skier is injured, positive feelings associated with physical challenges, being outdoors and spending time with friends are displaced. That void leads to isolation, one of the most serious mental side effects of injury, according to Zavilla.

To fight the isolation experienced by athletes rehabbing off-site, she
provides support through the team's Return to Sport Program, setting realistic weekly goals while ensuring recovery progress is registering on a psychological level as well. She uses questions like, "What is your pain right now?" and asks athletes to rate the degree to which they think their injury is rehabilitated. The latter is important in the case of overzealous athletes who insist, "Hey, I'm at 90 percent, almost time to get back out there." That's when Zavilla has to say, "No, dude, you have four months left," and gets to work adjusting goals and timelines.

In resisting the pit of negative feelings associated with injury, it also helps not to compare yourself with healthy friends or teammates, Zavilla explained. The U.S. Ski Team, for example, has return-to-snow camps that ease groups of injured athletes back onto the slopes together. "You're all in the same boat, so there's not that temptation to compete with other teammates," Zavilla added. "Instead, you're more likely to just be grateful to be back on your skis."

While it's unrealistic to plan your injury to coincide with one incurred by a sympathetic friend, the basic premise makes sense: you can either be happy and grateful to be out doing something you love, or you can be bitter and frustrated that you're not doing it as well as the other guys. Only one is productive for overall recovery.

Positive Feedback
For the past year, Zavilla has upped the tech ante at Winter Park's training center by using biofeedback to monitor rehabilitation. For example, one of her athletes suffered a tibial plateau fracture that required a dozen screws to repair. To go along with that horrifying image, the skier also experienced a "fear of returning to snow," which Zavilla said showed up as an increased heart rate on the biofeedback.

"Physically, she was close to complete recovery, but even imagining the act of skiing made her anxious," remembered Zavilla. "She would also favor her good leg during visualization, out of fear that the injured leg wasn't strong enough." Biofeedback information was instrumental in helping Zavilla guide the skier back to strength and confidence. "Physical recovery is important, but equally important is coherence and stability," she said. "If you don't feel broken, you don't hold back on your turns and you start to feel like yourself again."

Getting Back To Normal
For those that can't make it to the biofeedback lab or hire a mental skills coach, don't worry; Zavilla has some general tips for recovering from ski injuries this season:
- When you're doing your first runs after a mishap, remember, "Relax! Chill out, take a deep breath."
- "Remember, this is something you enjoy doing. It's normal, it's good."
- Eliminate the word "don't" from your mental vocabulary. "Once you start thinking, 'don't be afraid, don't get injured again,' that mindset triggers the exact things you're trying to avoid," Zavilla warned.

Personal experience has given Zavilla helpful insight into the recovery process, having come back from a knee injury five years ago and a concussion in the past year. "It was a good learning experience for me, because I understood what my athletes go through when they're trying to come back," she said, adding that she came away from both incidents with a new appreciation of what she was capable of.

Speaking of things that shouldn't be taken for granted, Zavilla strongly recommends strength and flexibility conditioning as a way to prepare for the mental side effects that come with injuries. Think of pre-season strength and flexibility workouts as an insurance policy. When you catch an edge, take a tumble and come up limping, you'll remember that extra gym time and think, "I'm definitely strong enough to recover from this."

To get involved in the RTS program (as an athlete or a coach), or to find out more, email Stephanie Zavilla at szavilla@winterparkresort.com

Stephanie Zavilla, Mental Skills Coach
Stephanie Zavilla of the Winter Park Resort Competition Center
Are We In A Data Hangover?

The future of fitness data could mean refining our tech, collecting more stats, or taking a step backwards.

By Jahla Seppanen

Fitness and wellness data is now a social event, a selling point, a campaign to prove a company’s worth. But as the value of knowing of how much we run, sleep and eat seemingly increases, some are asking: Are we in a data hangover?

“The consumer is already overloaded,” said Liz Dickinson, founder of Mio Global. “That’s why there’s such a high abandonment rate of wearables.” She finds that the lack of accountability in performance data is causing an overflow of products and programs that aren’t really telling us anything. As a result, consumers are looking at multitudes of data and getting exhausted trying to make sense of the stats.

And the problem isn’t limited to fitness data. When was the last time you sorted through those Belize vacation photos to create an album, or cleaned out your iTunes folder — is CeeLo Green still a thing?

And then there’s this question: How accurate is all this data?

True, there’s no wearable police putting companies that over or underestimate your daily step count behind bars, but many consumers have come to realize that not all fitness data is the same, with some being outright flawed. Yet wearable tech products continue to attract consumer dollars, and more importantly consumer mindspace. We’re overloaded, but still quite intrigued.

As Soleus Founder and CEO David Arnold put it, “More data doesn’t deter a consumer from buying, but it can definitely misinform them.”
Our Tech Needs Work
It’s OK to admit the industry’s tech needs work, just so long as it starts putting in the hours to make it better. Big names in sports and fitness like Nike, Under Armour, USA Swimming and Wilson are already inking partnerships with traditional tech firms to outsource data innovation (see: Apple, IBM Watson, Sony, HTC and BMW’s tech division).

“We’re seeing these collaborations show up in full force at The Consumer Electronics Show (CES), particularly in the Sports Tech Conference — a partnership between the Consumer Technology Association and The Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA).

“It used to be that cars and dishwashers were the big show items at CES,” said John Peters, SFIA senior director of sales and membership services. “Now sports technology is what’s sexy.”

Peters thinks there’s no such thing as too much data for SFIA’s brands and their consumers. “Whether it’s counting steps or calories, consumers are obsessed with it now,” he said. “In a world where an athlete’s success hinges on milliseconds and millimeters, high-performance improvement and feedback are critical.”

He anticipates that sensors in garments, sports tech accelerators, more emphasis on the youth sports market and enhanced gamification will soon shake up any staleness in the market.

The More The Merrier
More data can overwhelm consumers, but it can also create better overall insights, even if those insights are based on slightly incorrect data points. How? Because the more data we have, the longer the timeline to compute averages.

“More means long-term trends, which is a good thing considering the industry is still in a highly experimental phase when it comes to refining tracking technology,” said Josh Sharp, co-founder of Exist — a company that aggregates data from apps and devices consumers already use (i.e. trackers, productivity apps, your calendar, social media and even local weather) to spot big-picture trends like which music has proven to make you more productive.

Sharp sees the biggest bugaboo areas in data being food/nutrition tracking from manually entering daily intake, along with sleep tracking via actigraphy. “We’re in the early days of understanding how to best deliver on data being tracked,” he said, “and how to best personalize and contextualize our approach to the consumer.”

This seems to be the pinpoint of agreement among every tech and sportswear company in the space. The name of the game is now making sense of all the data in personalized, actionable, prescriptive solutions.

What Will Change?
Although not every player will evolve in the same way, many will make changes in the metric used to track (and ultimately judge) consumers’ fitness. A great example here is Mio Global’s Personal Activity Intelligence (PAI), which favors intensity over amount. PAI works by monitoring your heart rate and converting high-intensity bouts into PAI points. This means an exercise that raises an 80-year-old’s heart rate and another that raises a 20-year-old’s is considered equal. Reach 100 PAI Points a week, live longer. It’s complicated science made simple.

“Everyone is using their own scientific metrics to make people feel better about their fitness,” said Dickinson at Mio Global. “The other problem with this model is that it can be really hard to put in 10,000 steps, so after time people abandon the pursuit, and in hand, the device.”

Arnold with Soleus touched on a similar observation. “I call them (trackers) excuse-makers. They’re supposed to motivate you and show that you need to work out more. But when consumers see they haven’t taken enough steps or slept a full night, the consumer says ‘OK, guess I should have.’”

Arnold concluded, “If I’m inactive and didn’t sleep the night before, I don’t need a tracker to tell me.”

So while some brands charge forward with futuristic tech, others will take a step back to the basics.

“I’m not going to try and outdo Apple or Garmin,” said Arnold, who is opting to couple his GPS wearable company with training clubs instead of tech firms to perfect device accuracy. He said his goal moving forward is to take simple data and make it more affordable and fun. This means focusing on exactly which metrics are important — distance, pace, calories and heart rate. For serious athletes that would benefit from additional insights and stats, “they’ll talk to a professional coach and not an app,” Arnold said.

Even some tech industry veterans are waiting for the data overload to subside. Black Lab Sports Founder J.P. O’Brien, a former TechStars mentor for Nike+, made the strategic decision to back physical sporting goods products versus virtual ones. He told SGB that the market saturation in the latter is too heavy, and in the end, only one (maybe two) will really succeed.

What Data Do Consumers Care About?
One reason for the app avalanche is because mobile is uniquely well suited for fitness and wellness users — it moves with you. But consumers collect apps as they do photos and fitness data — it’s just another player in the crowded content pool.

The whole data debacle really is a race to heal any signs of the current hangover we’ve succumbed to at this point. And no matter which side you band with in term of curing the overload — by reining in outlandish stats or opening your arms for as much insight as you can get — we know for a fact that yes, our fitness data needs work, and in the future, we’ll most likely look back and laugh about how primitive the tech of today is. ■
The Age Of The Cross-Talented Athlete

With a lack of consistent ‘mega winters,’ and consumers who yearn for variety over mastery, skiing gear gets versatile.

By Erin English

Today's skiers are multi-faceted — they no longer fall neatly into the category of backcountry or alpine. That's created a swelling audience of winter enthusiasts who desire a “quiver of one” — a ski setup that can perform well both on-piste and off-piste — and hardgoods manufacturers that are increasingly focused on improving the versatility of their products.

“The ‘quiver-of-one’ customer is really popular and strong,” said Ross Herr, sales manager for Dynafit. “That category is where 90 percent of the market is focused right now.”

Backcountry skiing comes with the same risks it always has. But more people are taking the time to get schooled about those risks, and are getting involved with the sport. Why? Backcountry skiing is sexy; it's freedom; it's fun. Having a backcountry-compatible setup is a season-extender; after skiers carve out their last, slushy turns on a resort's end-of-season “mashed potatoes,” there's still gravy to be had in the nearby woods.

“People are still looking for adventure in skiing, and adventure is taking on a lot of different forms,” said Kim Miller, CEO of Scarpa North America. “A lot of people are trying backcountry skiing, cat skiing and hut trips. We are seeing those activities going mainstream.”

Also catching the attention of ski companies is a consumer interest in skiing for fitness, evidenced in part by the United States Ski Mountaineering Association's growing list of ski resorts with official uphill/downhill policies. In 2017/18, Dynafit is debuting Speedfit, a product line exclusively targeted at the uphill/downhill skier.

“There is a huge group of people who are ski touring on resorts and advocating for uphill policies,” Herr said. “These customers, they have families or they are super-busy. They drop their kids off for ski school and take a lap up for exercise, or go skin up the mountain after work.”

Most consumers, it seems, are benefiting from the blurring of lines between on-piste and off-piste gear. Once-delicate tech bindings are becoming so robust that backcountry and alpine skiers can place more faith in them. Conversely, boots are getting lighter and stronger, while skis are snappier and more responsive in varied conditions.

Even a die-hard skier of either of the two disciplines can appreciate the evolution happening in product design.

Boots Made For Walkin'

Novice or expert, awkwardly clomping from parking lot to lift in stiff boots has mostly been an inescapable part of an alpine skier’s day. But that reality is shifting.

"More people are coming out with ski-walk mechanisms,” said Pete Wagner, owner of Wagner Custom Skis. “The idea of comfort has trickled down into the alpine world.”

I think the only boots that you won't see with walkable soles in a few years will be race boots,” predicts Geoffrey Curtis, vice president of marketing for Marker Dalbello Völkl USA.

The key challenge for brands: matching comfort with performance. Many
early adopters of walkable boots found that in prioritizing off-snow comfort, they also signed themselves up for a less-than-stellar on-snow experience.

"Traditionally, walk mode has affected the performance of the boot, in terms of [proper] stiffness," said Joe Johnson, marketing manager for Salomon. "Companies are finding ways to get around that problem with a combination of materials and technology."

Part of Salomon’s solution, Sensifit Shell Technology, "puts thicker plastic where you need it — for power transmission — and thinner plastic where you don't," according to Johnson. The company has also found success in tweaking the pivot for its walk-mode boots. The pivot is oversized and kept high for good range of motion, without compromising performance.

Meanwhile, Dalbello and Marker introduced a boot sole technology called GripWalk in 2016/17 that will have a wider reach in the consumer market in fall 2017. The curved rubber GripWalk sole draws inspiration from a touring sole. Numerous boot manufacturers — including Tecnica, K2 and, of course, Dalbello — are incorporating the sole into their products.

While these new sole constructions show tremendous promise, and work with many types of bindings, consumers will be required to pose the right questions to their ski tech to determine compatibility.

Rethinking The Carbon Fiber Ski
Lightweight carbon fiber has reigned supreme as a ski material in recent years, but manufacturers have learned that going too light can be detrimental. Carbon fiber all by itself is a stiff and brittle material that gets "chattery" on snow. In choppy snow, skis with mass ultimately provide more power and offer better stability.

"It’s a happy balance that you want to find," Wagner of Wagner Custom Skis said.

To maximize carbon fiber’s potential and negate its downsides, manufacturers have gotten creative with the other materials they incorporate into their skis. A combination of Paulownia wood and carbon fiber has proved popular with numerous manufacturers, while G3 is finding success with polyurethane (PU) to reduce ski chatter. For 2016/17, the company debuted a ski combining PU with carbon fiber that has been met with positive reviews.

"We are putting PU in the sidewall of all of our skis for 2017/18," said Dustin Butcher, manager of marketing and creative for G3. "The big technology story for G3 is the polyurethane … for dampening the carbon fiber of the ultralight backcountry ski."

Not just for boosting your Omega-3 intake anymore, flax has been heralded by Salomon as effective for dampening out skis.

At Marker Dalbello Völkl, Curtis points to smarter design as the key to maximizing any ski’s potential. "As significant as the materials are, it’s the way skis are being put together that has evolved," Curtis said. "Our 3D Ridge construction, where the ski is thin on the edges and thicker in the middle, is an example of taking material we have and trying to make a better product."

Designers at Blizzard, meanwhile, haven’t limited themselves to one type of carbon fiber; the company utilizes both the bi-directional and uni-directional versions in its skis. "We have learned how to use these specific types of materials for different needs," said Jed Duke, director of product marketing for Blizzard/Tecnica.

Everything In Moderation
Rocking a ski with some outrageous waist width used to spark both incredulity and admiration in others; in 2017, not so much.

"After a number of years of skis getting wider and more rockered, everything is getting much more moderated," said Adam Ruscitto, K2 Skis’ global product line manager.

Across the board, manufacturers say that fat skis, with waist widths starting around 110mm, are falling out of favor. Four or five years back, wide boards were all the rage, purchased by recreational skiers to specialists — mostly in western states where true powder is more prevalent. Today, the waist width sweet spot for most consumers lies somewhere between 80mm and 100mm. When consumers are seeking out an all-purpose ski — a workhorse on the groomers and in the backcountry — an overall thinner profile is better.

In the end, skiers buy gear based on conditions, and most resorts have not seen a “mega winter” in years. As weather continues to shift and product design along with it, the once-mythical “quiver of one” is now a reality.
Feeling The Burn

SGB spoke with skin care experts on the essentials of winter skin care.

By Carly Terwilliger

It’s a frosty winter day, and like any normal person you’re planning to spend it being active outside. But in the midst of congratulating yourself on getting sweat-wicked, insulated and waterproofed, you forgot that square foot of face that remains exposed. Consequently, after a day of outdoor fun in the high-altitude sun, your legs aren’t the only things feeling the burn.

Even after you’ve caught on to the fact that yes, sunscreen is necessary even when it’s cold and 90 percent of your body is covered, the details can be confusing. Winter air is particularly dry, so make sure you’re using thick protection. But hang on; snow is wet, so make sure it’s waterproof too. And drink lots of water – surely welcome advice to someone about to put on four layers of clothing in preparation for being outside in below-freezing weather.

Skin care isn’t one size fits all, so just like testing out demo gear at the rental shop, be prepared to try different things before finding something that works. We reached out to four skin care pros for advice on pointing your skis and snowshoes down the path to healthy winter skin.

The Basics

“The biggest mistake is assuming that because it’s snowing that skin doesn’t need to be protected,” said David Lawrence, president of Joshua Tree Skin Care, which makes organic lip balms, healing salves and face sticks for the active outdoor lifestyle. “Regardless of whether or not the sun is shining, applying SPF to the face, lips and hands, which are often exposed and prone to chapping, before leaving the house is critical.”

Also, before you even get outside, skin damage is exacerbated by “low humidity and heated air from a furnace,” said Tony Stanislav, sales and marketing manager at Chamois Butt’r, originally designed as a skin lubricant for cyclists but later embraced by other athletes bedeviled by chafing, which is made worse by dry winter conditions. Applying something soothing at the start of your day will prevent discomfort and itch at the end of it.

A rising skin protection trend is the replacement of lotions and sprays with moisturizing sunscreen sticks, which are mess-free and can be applied without removing gloves. The thick formulas keep out both harmful UV rays and moisture-sapping winter air, and many are fragrance-free to prevent irritation. To sum up, said Lawrence, “Snow should be light and fluffy, but winter skin protection should be thick and balmy,” so don’t assume the stuff you use while surfing and rafting will do the trick in January.
If even a pocket-sized stick sounds cumbersome, Adventuress, founded by Michele Carter for use on “hiking trails, the ski slopes and just about everywhere else in between,” designed individually packaged sunscreen “swipes” to stash in jackets and gear bags. Carter also has a hack for making one product pull double duty. She uses SPF15 lip balm on “cheeks and other areas of my skin that need extra protection from wind exposure.”

When considering ingredients, why should you care about what you’re slathering on your face, as long as it works? Organic skin care brand All Good Founder and President Caroline Duell has an answer — “What goes on the body goes in the body.” The pores dumping out sweat into your organic merino wool baselayer are a two-way street, and the unpronounceable elements of some sunscreens don’t stay on the surface.

For those who would prefer to avoid the possibility of scary side effects from chemical sunscreen ingredients, there are plenty of effective natural alternatives. For example, "Look for zinc oxide as a healthy sun protection ingredient that provides broad-spectrum protection against UVA and UVB radiation,” advised Joshua Tree’s Lawrence.

The bottom line — there’s no excuse for skipping the sunscreen, so pick up whatever works for you and remember to apply and reapply.

**Here Comes The Sun**

Anyone who’s been burnt to a crisp on a cloudy day knows this rule — the sun is always shining. “While it may be easier to remember to reapply sunscreen on a bluebird powder day or while in the ocean, it’s vital that skiers and snowboarders reapply SPF throughout the day,” said Lawrence, regardless of conditions. When your face starts to hurt from being pummeled by ice pellets, treat it as a reminder to slick on some more sunscreen. Also, fight the snow by becoming one with the snow — “Don’t forget to moisturize from the inside out – drink water,” said Duell.

And remember to pucker up. “Your lips are exceptionally sensitive,” said Lawrence. “Sun protection for your lips is more important on the slopes than any other time.” He pointed out that you will be sitting on the lift for part of your day anyway, so that’s a good opportunity to reapply sunscreen and a lip balm of at least SPF15. Carter from Adventuress and All Good’s Duell also singled out lips as an often-overlooked sunscreen priority.

**From Lift To Lodge**

Congratulations! You’ve followed our tips so far and made it off the mountain without looking like Leonardo DiCaprio in “The Revenant.” However, your après-ski moisturizing routine is just as important. “Winter skin care doesn’t end when you get back inside and sit down by the fire,” cautioned Lawrence. “It is essential to rehydrate the skin after a day outside in the elements.”

And according to Stanislav with Chamois Butt’r, the hot showers that mercifully bring feeling back to fingers and toes aren’t doing your skin any favors either, as they "strip oil from your skin that is crucial for moisture retention.” Use a gentle cleanser and stock up on sticks, balms or goops that provide a hefty layer of relief for dry, wind-chapped skin, and consider replacing your water-based lotion with one formulated with less-evaporative ingredients like jojoba oil, sunflower oil, aloe and beeswax.

Finally, skin care for outdoor enthusiasts is headed in the same direction as apparel — people want something they can put on and forget about, regardless of the activity. A little pot of multi-functional healing salve — All Good and Joshua Tree both make a version — is portable and works on everything from chapped lips to torn cuticles.
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<td>National Sporting Goods Association</td>
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<td>Mount Prospect, IL 60056</td>
<td>847.296.6742</td>
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<td>f 847.391.9827</td>
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<td>Nation's Best Sports</td>
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<td>Outdoor Industry Association</td>
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<td>f 301.495.632</td>
<td>sfia.org</td>
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<td>Snow Sports Industries America</td>
<td>8377-B Greensboro Drive</td>
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<td>McLean, VA 22102</td>
<td>703.556.9020</td>
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<tr>
<td>f 703.821.8276</td>
<td>snowsports.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snowsports Merchandising Corp.</td>
<td>225 Cadwell Drive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Springfield, MA 01104</td>
<td>413.739.7331</td>
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<tr>
<td>f snowsportsmerchandising.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports, Inc.</td>
<td>333 2nd Avenue North</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lewistown, MT 59457</td>
<td>406.538.3496</td>
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<tr>
<td>f 406.538.2801</td>
<td>sportsinc.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Specialists Ltd.</td>
<td>590 Fishers Station Drive I Suite 110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victor, NY 14564</td>
<td>585.742.1010</td>
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<td>f 585.742.2645</td>
<td>sportsspecialistsltd.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennis Industry Association</td>
<td>1 Corpus Christi Place I Suite 117</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newtown, CT 29928</td>
<td>843.686.3036</td>
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<tr>
<td>f 843.686.3078</td>
<td>tennisindustry.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td>8211 South 194th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kent, WA 98032</td>
<td>253.872.8746</td>
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