

# FROM THE EDITOR

**It's long been said on Madison Avenue that it's more about the pitch than it is about the product.**

For example, the first low-calorie beer that came on the market, back in the mid-60s, was Gablinger's Diet Beer—from a taste standpoint, not, apparently, a bad beer at all. Gablinger's, however, was a complete flop in the market. It seems that beer drinkers were simply not interested in a beer that advertised itself as having fewer calories than regular beer. A few years later, Miller came into the market with a very similar beer—Miller Lite—but with a very different approach.

The Miller Lite ads never mentioned the words diet or calories. Instead, using a bunch of rough-and-tumble ex-jocks as their spokesmen, the Miller Lite campaign featured the two famous phrases,

“tastes great” and “less filling”. In other words, forget the calories, here was a beer that not only tasted good, but one you could also drink more of! To say the least, Miller Lite was not only successful, but spearheaded a whole new category in the brewery business.

As so often is the case, how a product is positioned can make all the difference in attracting customers—or turning them off. So, where does hunting fit into this equation?

It could be argued, of course, that hunting has never had to sell itself, that it has always been something, not unlike a family heirloom, that was simply passed from one generation to the next. That's undoubtedly true, and over the years, family introduction has, and continues to be, the primary pathway for hunter recruitment.

It could also be argued that we can no longer put all our “recruitment” eggs in that one basket. The latest research I've seen shows that for every 100 hunters that drop out, only 70 new hunters are taking their place.

A key question today for all of us in the hunting community is how can we broaden our appeal? In short, how can we position hunting in ways that might attract those outside our traditional customer base?

In recent years, we've seen two such examples. The locavore movement, for example, has and continues to bring in non-traditional hunters whose prime hunting motivation is in obtaining organic, sustainable and locally sourced protein.

I recently read a story about three “farm/field-to-table” chefs who were on a goose hunt together. Sure, there was a lot of talk about recipes, but also plenty of back and forth about spending time outdoors with friends and the challenge of the hunt itself. While these three chefs came into our sport from a new direction, they seem to have quickly found the place we old-timers have been all along.

A second group of new hunters is emerging from the fitness boom that has fueled a significant rise in triathlon and marathon races as well as



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similar “extreme” sports. Big game hunts in remote areas are now seen by some fitness buffs as a rewarding and natural test of stamina and endurance. If you missed it, check out the article in the Saturday/Sunday, December 19-20 *Wall Street Journal*, “Trophy Hunting's Unlikely Boom.”

As one hunter in this article mentioned, he enjoyed those hunts when he didn't come home with a trophy as much as those when he did—a new hunter, perhaps, but not a new mind-set.

As we develop new programs and new editorial within our organization and publications, let's keep in mind ways we can stimulate growth in our ranks from non-traditional sources. Locavores and fitness buffs are a great start. Who's next?

Back when the Miller Lite commercials were popular, there were those who favored the team that yelled, “Tastes great!” Others sided with the team that proclaimed, “Less filling!” At the end of the day, it didn't matter. We all enjoyed the same beer.

Hope to see you down the trail. ■

*Doug Painter*



Students of the a pilot program designed to attract new adult audiences to hunting learn how to process game meat. The Learn to Hunt Program provides participants with an opportunity to learn in a hands-on, safe environment the skills necessary to hunt deer in Michigan. Participants were exposed to concepts such as how hunting contributes to conservation, deer biology, hunter ethics and responsibilities, and safe crossbow handling. LEARN MORE ON PG. 44.