



A CATALYST FOR BUSINESS PROFITABILITY

While there are many factors affecting business profitability that no trade association can control, we at the American Sportfishing Association are always seeking opportunities to help facilitate stronger sales and efficiencies that support a healthy bottom line.

Pragmatically lending such support whenever possible is one of our fundamental roles.

Some of our more direct routes for supporting business members' profitability are producing a viable trade show, providing resources to support efficient business administration, and making relevant and timely data and statistics available for understanding markets and trends.

ICAST: THE PLACE TO BE

Over more than 50 years, the American Sportfishing Association's trade show has come under many banners, from the straightforward "Fishing Tackle Trade Show" to names that reflect our enthusiasm, such as "Wonderful Outdoor World" and "Super Outdoor Market." In 1998, the show became the International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades, or simply ICAST.

But it's always been the place to be.



The American Sportfishing Association's previous organization proudly promoted its first self-produced trade show in 1958. Some 136 exhibitors showcased their products for more than 2,500 attendees.

Today, several thousand people from across the globe each year come together for the sportfishing industry's signature annual event. ICAST is like several football fields full of fishing products—the largest such showcase in the world.

But it wasn't always that way. In the early days of the show, we were a "mom and pop" industry, and proud of it. We didn't travel nearly as much then. There was no email or fax. We didn't have smartphones to keep in touch in an instant. We just had a big show that brought everyone together once each year.



The Hotel Sherman in Chicago where the first trade show was held in 1958.



Over all this time, it's where lasting friendships and business partnerships have been formed and fostered. It's where companies and buyers wrote their orders for the whole year. It's the event that sets the trends in our industry: the first soft baits...the first graphite rods...the first molded lures...the first kid's combos... it all started at the show.



That claim to fame grew as a result of the New Product Showplace competition, ICAST's main attraction. Best of Show honors, bestowed upon the best new products featured in the showcase, can catapult product sales and publicity, turning even early entrepreneurs into overnight success stories.

Today the values of ICAST are different from what they used to be. For example, the way inventory management and distribution are handled has dramatically changed the way orders are placed and fulfilled, making it a much more mechanized and timely process that occurs throughout the year.



Today, ICAST booth space regularly sells out early and the show hosts several thousand people from around the world—9,300 attendees in 2013 is the record. That show featured 425 exhibitors and nearly 500,000 square feet of floor space, about the size of eight football fields.

Show of Strength

The importance of having a successful trade show manifests far beyond the walls of the convention center. The vast majority of funds that the American Sportfishing Association uses for all its activities year-round on behalf of the industry—including public-policy advocacy and member services—comes from trade show revenues and member dues (each accounts for almost half of association funds). The association's consumer shows and the KeepAmericaFishing™ advocacy campaign also are becoming important sources of revenue.

The show has evolved to include businesses and buyers with broader reach into related markets, such as those represented by outdoor apparel and accessory companies or boating businesses.

ICAST's value on the product marketing side has been growing in recent years, largely due to a dramatic increase in outdoor journalists' attendance at the show. The opportunity for "earned" media coverage can be as valuable as advertising, if not more so.

In addition, retailers and cataloguers are increasingly using the venue to generate substantive content for websites and social media marketing. The show offers a more efficient way to amass variable content, including product demonstrations from the pros, than would otherwise be possible.

ICAST is still the best place, and often the only place, to exhibit and view companies' entire product lines. It's still the best place to debut new products and learn about products from the experts. It's still a highly efficient place for conducting business because so many associates are gathered in one place.

As long as that's the case, ICAST also will continue to be the place where the most valuable business relationships are born, strengthened, and celebrated.

Special Features

Three special features that add value to the ICAST experience are:

The New Product Showcase, which officially started in 1995 but had been through several previous iterations;

The Chairman of the Board of Directors' Industry Awards Reception, begun in 1962, and now the venue for presenting New Product Showcase Best of Show awards; and

The Industry Breakfast, which became an annual highlight in 1980, though it began in the 1960s.

“The trade association and the show both serve to really ground you in why you're in this industry. We're an enthusiast business, and we love what we do, and that's why there are so many people who've been in this industry for a long time. Without the trade association looking out for us for all this time, we'd have been eaten away by counter-interests. The show reminds us of why we're in this business to begin with and gives us a reason to celebrate.”

—Dave Pfeiffer, President, Shimano American Corporation



BOTTOM LINE BENEFITS

Sometimes the little things are the big things. The American Sportfishing Association's #1 job is listening to the concerns of its members—even the challenges of day-to-day business operations—and finding the best ways to resolve issues and help businesses improve their profitability.

Looking back to the 1940s through the 1970s, our direct business support represented a remarkable array of assistance. It ranged from creating the first-ever industry standards for rod part names to compiling sales data from scores of companies to keeping a record of delinquent jobbers. We made reports available on new patents and offered freight auditing services to prevent overcharges. All of these services and resources were in response to members' needs at the time.



In the early 2000s, we created a suite of all-new discounts and conveniences to support operational efficiencies for businesses. These relate to health and business insurance, shipping, travel, banking and credit services, marketing, and much more, with savings that can surpass member dues for most companies.

More recently we've retained consultants with specialized expertise and experience related to our industry to support individual members. For example, members have at their disposal experts on human resources, patents, outdoor recreation data and statistics, and the excise tax on fishing gear and motor boat fuels. During the Sportfishing Summit and the ICAST trade show, we also offer free instructional seminars to help support different aspects of business operations.

We Can Help

The American Sportfishing Association helps manufacturer-members understand the Sport Fish Restoration Act and how to comply with its legal requirements most efficiently. We also work with the Internal Revenue Service to ensure fair and consistent application of the excise tax established by the act. We provide expert consultants and resources for members and facilitate assistance from the IRS; a good example is the special instructional seminars we include in our annual events.

DATA-DRIVEN

In recent years in particular, the American Sportfishing Association has greatly expanded endeavors to compile statistics related to fishing participation and the economic impacts of the sport. These are not only valuable for business planning, but also in demonstrating fishing's popularity overall and asserting our economic clout—both powerful assets on the public-policy front. And they help us better target efforts to promote more participation and discern broader trends over longer periods of time.

For example, we started an effort in the early 2000s to extrapolate and further analyze data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* to create a

series of *Today's Angler* reports. These dig deep into the data to highlight more specific information on angler demographics, favorite species, and spending habits. The reports give businesses valuable fodder for targeted marketing, product development, and planning future growth.

We also regularly compile statistics related to fishing license sales, wholesale shipments and retail trends, and imports.

Specific studies we commissioned more recently take a look at anglers' lifestyle and license-buying habits, as well as issues surrounding access to fishing and boating. These are helping us understand how to continually refine our efforts to encourage more people to take part in these pursuits.

Getting Resourceful

The American Sportfishing Association compiles data and statistics from public and private sources, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, conducted every five years; the National Marine Fisheries Service's annual *Marine Recreational Fishing Statistics Survey*; annual reports on *Comparative Sports Participation Trends* from the National Sporting Goods Association; and Harris Interactive's "Favorite Leisure Time Activity Poll."

