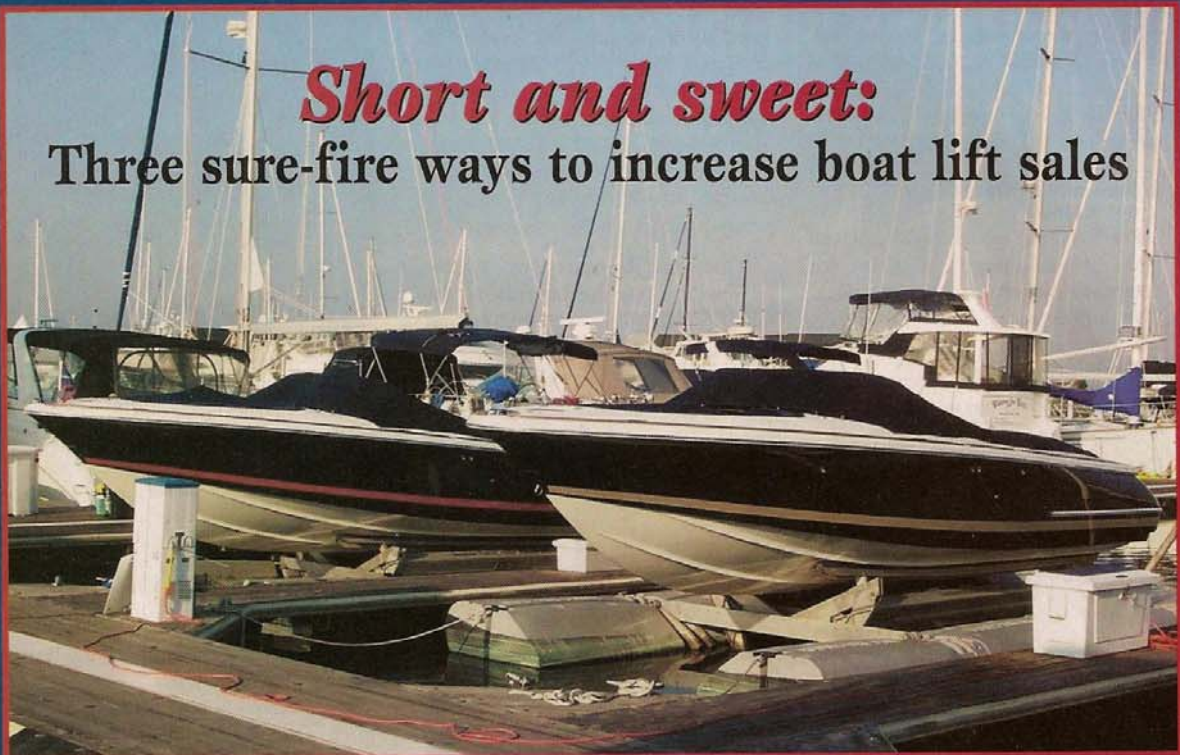


## Short and sweet: Three sure-fire ways to increase boat lift sales



*"Customers get to check out the new lift technology during their test drive, making it easy for dealers to add it on to the sale."*

BY KEN HEY

Recent breakthroughs in boat lifts are a big break for dealers. Today's lifts are not only practical, but have become one of the most profitable accessories of the boat sale. They can also increase boat sales and customer satisfaction. Modern boat lifts can now be sold like a boat, prepped like a boat, floored and financed like a boat, launched like a boat, and tied up like a boat.

Curt Stevens is president and owner of Chesapeake Marine Group, a Chesapeake Bay area dealer for luxury Chris-Craft powerboats and the popular Southport sport fishing boat line. His dealership is located in Stevensville, on Maryland's eastern shore, just across the Bay Bridge from Annapolis. Stevens has been involved in marketing and manufacturing high-end sailboats and powerboats for more than two decades. In 2004, Stevens added Sunstream Lifts to his sales lineup.

Stevens, and many other dealers, discovered that the lifts could add significantly to the bottom line in boat transactions. "An unexpected benefit

emerged when we also found that our lift sales can generate both an increase in new boat sales, plus increased demand for higher end boats since they can be stored out of the water and easily maintained in premium condition," Stevens said.

Here are three simple ways to maximize boat lift sales:

### 1. Be proactive, not reactive

Don't wait for the boater to bring up the subject; make it part of the initial boat sale. "One of the first things we



*"With the FloatLift, we can immediately take a customer on a test drive rather than having to schedule an appointment."*

address with a prospective customer is the issue of boat storage," Stevens said. "Many prospects are eager for help in this area, and relieved to know that choosing one of our lifts is a highly workable solution," he said.

## 2. Remember: 'Out of sight, out of mind'

Products not creatively displayed make it unnecessarily difficult for potential customers to consider buying. "We utilize an on-water showroom, with our inventory stored on Sunstream FloatLifts, ready to demo," Stevens

said. He added that the remote controlled hydraulic lift system has a "James Bond" type of appeal. Customers love the speed and technology of the solar-charged models and often decide on the spot to add a lift to their purchase. Some even choose to add an optional "HoverCover," creating a ready-made garage for their boats.

## 3. Overcome the objections

Moving a potential buyer to an actual boat-buyer involves careful listening and the ability to overcome the customer's objections. "We find that boat

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lifts are an effective tool to overcome non-financial objections of the sale," Stevens said. Dealers should consider bringing up lifts as a response to these common concerns would-be boaters give when they're wavering over purchasing a boat:

- "I don't think we will have time to use this boat enough."
- "I don't think I want to spend my weekends maintaining another toy."
- "I really don't want to store a boat this nice in the water."

Incorporating a boat lift in the sales pitch can address these objections. Plus, customer satisfaction after the sale increases, since they are using their boats more often, spending far less time cleaning, and—since the lifts are unsinkable—not worrying about the safety of the boat when they are away.

## Results

At Chesapeake Marine Group, the net result of adding boat lifts has been a solid increase in boat sales, easier up-selling to premium boats like Chris-Craft, and a greater likelihood of repeat business. "Customers tend to keep their lifts longer than they keep their boats, promoting a long-term relationship with our dealership," Stevens said.

Incorporating lifts into a dealer's business is a good way to vertically integrate, attract more prospects, close more boat sales, and sell more products to the same customer. With the softening of the marine industry, it's a good time to investigate whether lifts can raise a dealer's bottom line. ↓

*Ken Hey is CEO of Sunstream Boat Lifts in Kent, Wash. For more information on Sunstream Boat Lifts and their dealer programs, contact George Zick at 253-395-0500 or via e-mail at gzik@sunstreamcorp.com.*

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