

Smart Partnerships Create Sustainable

Market for ATA Members

By Cassie Scott

If you are running an archery business, you are not just concerned about business today or six months from now. You are trying to create markets that will sustain your business five to 10 years from now.

It is wise to think about sustainability and growth opportunities. The good news is the Archery Trade Association is focused on the same target. Its industry's growth begins at the grassroots level.

In 2011, USA Archery was spinning its wheels a bit on recruitment, according to CEO Denise Parker. The organization – the national governing body for Olympic archery – was trying to figure out how to grow target archery. Enter the ATA and the Easton Foundations, which both partnered with USA Archery to create an Outreach program that became a self-sufficient, sustainable success in three years.

The collaboration increased archery participation, created Explore Archery and revamped Level 1 and Level 2 instructor-certification courses. Those achievements helped grow archery in communities nationwide, creating more archers and paying customers for retailers and manufacturers.

Mutually Beneficial Outcomes

“There’s no question about it. We couldn’t have created the current Outreach program on our own,” Parker said. “The ATA provided funding, talent and expertise and we’re now better positioned to get beginning archers more involved in the sport and at different levels.”

The USA Archery Outreach program no longer relies on ATA funding and it has six full-time staff members working under Mary Emmons, USA Archery’s director of program development.



With support from the Easton Foundations, the ATA and USA Archery developed Explore Archery, an educational program that introduces beginners of all ages and abilities to this lifelong sport. The program launched in 2014.

From the partnership’s 2011 start through the end of 2016, USA Archery has also more than quadrupled its membership from 4,704 to 22,070, nearly doubled its club memberships from 471 to 973, increased its certified instructors and coaches tenfold from 2,421 to 23,731 and increased its annual revenues by 40 percent.

Although the ATA helped USA Archery develop a quality Outreach program, its efforts also helped increase archery and bowhunting participation.

A nationwide survey by Responsive Management for the ATA showed recreational archery and bowhunting participation jumped over 20 percent from 2012 to 2015, with 23.8 million Americans age 18 and older taking part. That increase was driven primarily by sustained growth in recreational archery. Meanwhile, ATA members also benefited from the collaboration because more archers mean more equipment sales, more bow repairs and maintenance and more customers in general.

“Thanks to the vision of Denise Parker and the USA Archery board, the

hard work of Mary Emmons and ATA staff, the Easton Foundations and a fair amount of funding from the ATA board, USA Archery is a model program for its members and our industry,” Jay McAninch, ATA president/CEO, said.

Parker is grateful for the ATA’s investment. “We said we wanted to be self-sufficient in three years and we were,” she said. “That’s what partnership is all about. It’s not smart to sustain or use one organization to promote another for too long. We’re a better partner to the industry because USA Archery is more capable and can provide better programs. The collaboration was transformative for our organization.”

From the Beginning

So, how did all that come to be?

Parker envisioned a robust outreach program that would support the sport at the grassroots level and start clubs to involve people in archery. “We reached out to the ATA and the Easton Foundations and talked to them about what USA Archery needed: a stronger

Photo Credit: USA Archery



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grassroots development effort,” she said. “We knew we couldn’t do it alone as quickly as we needed but if we worked together, we could make it happen. Each organization played a role in the areas in which we were strong. I very much think it was a group effort to build a stronger outreach and grassroots program.”

McAninch saw the partnership’s value to the industry and developed a plan that supported USA Archery in many ways. “The most important thing an industry trade association can do is help organizations build capacity to grow participation,” McAninch said. “To do that, an organization needs three things: staff capable of introducing people to the sport, programs designed to engage new participants in a fun and memorable way and money to support both.”

McAninch said the partnership was a natural fit because USA Archery dedicated time and money to building a program to sustain itself for a long time. With the partnership in place, both teams searched for a designated point person to dedicate time, energy and resources to the program.

Identifying Innovators

With the ATA’s support, Emmons was hired in 2012 as USA Archery’s outreach director. She stood out in her previous role with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and

was excited to help USA Archery develop introductory turn-key programs.

Once at USA Archery, Emmons worked with Emily Beach, the ATA’s senior director of outreach and education and Jennifer Mazur, the ATA’s director of archery and bowhunting programs, to create outreach programs and resources geared toward recruiting archery and bowhunting newcomers. Their efforts

helped both organizations develop programs to recruit, retain and reactivate archers at all levels nationwide.

“One of the things that ATA did was to provide staff expertise,” Parker explained. “This was unique; their staff was able to help write curriculum and develop it.”

The Easton Foundations provided assistance as well, according to Parker: “They not only built and supported archery facilities but also provided grant funding for USA Archery programs, so as clubs were trying to get started, they had funds to pay for instructor certification and archery equipment.”

Creating Safe, Effective Programs

Movies like “Brave,” “The Avengers” and “The Hunger Games” fueled major archery interest. In fact, archery was one of NBC’s most watched sports during the Olympics. Excitement about archery on the big screen and at the Olympics created major interest in bows and arrows.

Unfortunately, many people didn’t know where to go to get started. Therefore, the ATA and USA Archery started developing Explore Archery, an educational program that introduces beginners of all ages and abilities to this lifelong sport.

With Beach’s expertise and support from the Easton Foundations, Explore Archery launched in 2014.



Jennifer Mazur, the ATA’s director of archery and bowhunting programs, used her curriculum-development skills to help USA Archery revamp and improve its Level 1 and Level 2 instructor-certification programs, which ensure archery gets taught safely. These certification classes are offered annually at the ATA Trade Show.

Shortly after, state wildlife agencies added it to their outdoor-education programs.

At the same time, Mazur used her curriculum-development skills to help USA Archery revamp and improve its Level 1 and Level 2 instructor-certification programs, which ensure archery gets taught safely. USA Archery also added Level 2 instructor-trainer certification training to teach instructors how to certify other instructors, thus creating self-sustaining programs.

Each certification course received streamlined content, including “drills and skills” activities so archery classes could be taught in a progressive sequence like most sports. The improved certification courses were welcomed by retail shops



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trying to increase revenues through archery programming.

Although Emmons knew that Explore Archery and better certification opportunities would introduce people to target archery, she was excited to know participants could explore other opportunities such as bowhunting, field archery and 3-D tournaments.

Beach agreed. "These programs help recruit more people into archery," she said. "We helped USA Archery create them because, in the end, they increase exposure, awareness and involvement in archery. They're now another outlet to hear about archery opportunities."

Glimpsing the Future

Today, the two teams are more independent but both believe future collaboration will be beneficial. USA Archery's Outreach program is well-established and self-sustained and its beginning programs are in place at the grassroots level. It is now focusing on the middle of its athlete-development pipeline, which introduces communities and state park associations to archery programs.

Beach and her outreach team, including Mazur, will keep supporting USA Archery's programs. They also plan to approach communities after USA Archery introduces archery and offer Explore Bowhunting or Explore Bowfishing as next-step programs.

The three organizations – ATA, USA Archery and the Easton Foundations – continue to meet on an ongoing basis and work together on growing the sport of archery.

"We opened a lot of doors initially for USA Archery to begin its outreach efforts but USA Archery is now opening doors for us," Beach said. "We'll try to take advantage of that."

The ATA also intends to work with ATA-member retailers in those areas to ensure their stores are prepared for new participants. Both groups will focus on growing archery participation and the archery industry is expected to grow and prosper because of it.

Register Now For The 2018 ATA Show

By ATA Staff

The bowhunting industry's largest and most inclusive trade show heads to Indianapolis from January 11-13, 2018. Besides helping ATA-member companies maximize their profits and grow bowhunting participation, the ATA strives to ensure a positive experience for show exhibitors and attendees. That is why the ATA urges attendees to register early and book hotels in the official ATA block.

To Register and Reserve Your Room: 1. Ensure your ATA membership is current.

You must be an ATA member to register for the 2018 ATA Trade Show. Current members can renew their membership within the members-only portal. Visit archerytrade.org, select "Member Login" from the upper right-hand corner and log in using your member credentials.

Those wishing to join the ATA may submit a membership application by visiting archerytrade.org/members/join.

2. Register for the show.

You must register for show badges to attend the show and book hotels in the ATA block. Register online by logging in to the members-only portal and selecting "Trade Show Registration" from the left sidebar.

3. Make your hotel reservations.

The ATA hotel block offers rooms



at Indianapolis' best rates during the show. You will gain access to hotel reservations during the final step of the registration process. After registering online, click the "book hotel" link.

To learn more about the hotel rooms, visit archerytrade.org/trade-show/hotels-and-transportation.

For questions about ATA membership or show registration, contact the ATA Trade Show, business and membership office toll-free at (866) 266-2776.

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