

EYE OF THE BUYER

AN INSIGHTFUL LOOK AT WHAT'S TRENDING ACROSS THE NATION THROUGH THE EYES OF THE INDUSTRY'S MOST INFLUENTIAL RETAIL BUYERS.

By Michael Sudmeier



TRAVIS ANDERSON
zAKs Boardroom
Anchorage, Alaska



DENNIS NAZARI
Owner, Salty Peaks
Salt Lake City, Utah



WARREN CURRIE
Owner, The Easy Rider
Edmonton, Alberta



BEN OLSON
Owner, Damage
Duluth, Minnesota



STEVE KLASSEN
Owner, Wave Rave
Mammoth Lakes,
California



MICHAEL TOOHEY
Darkside Buyer and
Store Manager
Stowe, Vermont

How have early season sales been going this year?

WC: We have had some cold weather and early snow, so sales have been great. We had our best October on record for hard good sales.

SK: So far so good. We have had good snow, so we are up.

TA: Sales are very good, and we're seeing a ton of support for shopping local. [Sales are] up from last year and the year before, although we are still a growing business and were not affected by the low snow last year.

MT: Surprisingly well. We are definitely seeing some residual lag in pre-season sales from the brutal season we had last year, but the East Coast is amazing in its optimism, and our customers are snowboarders—we don't have a lot of "fair weather" shredders here.

What products have been moving especially well this season?

DN: Lib Tech and Never Summer reverse camber boards—both companies have patents and the real-deal geometry.

BO: Since we have had a cooler fall, I've seen a good amount of beanies, hoodies, and flannels moving.

TA: Splitboards and backcountry accessories are growing because of the new technology and more user-friendly designs.

MT: Our boots have been walking out of the store this fall, literally. Brands like Capita, Lib Tech, and Rome have been key players in our early season sales. Also, with the lack of outerwear sales last season, people are itching for some new threads.

What are the biggest trends you see shaping the shred market?

DN: Deep powder riding and powder surfing are on the upswing—if you're

lucky enough to be in the areas that get the goods.

BO: Weather, prices, and participation.

TA: Backcountry and splitboarding are huge for our area. More people are recognizing the investment in higher tech outerwear and clothing that also have technical features.

MT: Core brands designed by snowboarders for snowboarders, as cliché as that sounds, which include guys like Dinosaurs Will Die, Lobster, Switchback, Smokin, Signal, Friends, Rhythm, and Niche.

What will you be watching closely this buying cycle?

WC: Companies that can ship on time. This season has seen polar opposites—either great early shipping or pathetic shipping—I still don't have [some] product. I have canceled more late product this fall than ever before.

DN: I'm looking for something new in the board-to-foot interface. The coolest things to happen with bindings in the last twenty years are the ratchet, toe caps, and a cool paint job. Personally, I'm tired of looking at the same old crap year after year. Designers should start thinking outside the box and make some real advancements.

MT: My sights are definitely going to be set on brands that are up-and-coming. If I told you who those brands were, I'd have to kill you . . . It's important to us as a core snowboard shop to recognize our roots and support brands that are taking a different approach to snowboarding. Most of us calling the shots within the industry are pretty old in relation to how long snowboarding has been around. The kids driving the sport—and ultimately deciding which direction snowboarding is going—are the voice that we need to be listening to."

