



2026 - 2028

# Strategic Plan



**Developed by the MRAA Board of Directors,  
MRAA's Strategic Partners, and the MRAA Staff**



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## Why We Exist

MRAA believes the marine industry thrives when dealers succeed. By empowering dealers with the tools, education, and advocacy they need, we strengthen dealer businesses, elevate customer experiences, and ensure the boating lifestyle endures for generations.

## Mission, Vision, and Values

**MRAA'S Vision:** A vibrant, united marine industry where every dealer is equipped to excel, every customer enjoys an exceptional boating experience, and boating remains an accessible, lifelong passion.

**MRAA'S Mission:** To fuel the success of marine retailers by delivering training, tools and insights that drive dealer performance, customer satisfaction, and industry growth.

**MRAA'S Brand Positioning:** MRAA is the trusted catalyst for success in the marine retail industry, empowering dealers to thrive by delivering industry-leading insights, expert guidance, and proven solutions that transform challenges into opportunities and drive sustainable growth.

## Core Values

**Authenticity:** First and foremost, we lead with genuine humility, kindness and integrity in building and nurturing relationships with MRAA team members, volunteers and all industry stakeholders.

**Accountability:** We demonstrate transparency and accountability in operating a member-driven organization, using great care and responsibility in how we invest our industry's time and financial resources in pursuit of the MRAA mission and vision.

**Leadership:** We exemplify authentic leadership in how we serve our industry, the dealership community and our team, and in how we represent the voice of marine retailers, collaborate on behalf of their best interests and deliver them quality programs and services.

**Drive:** We strive for continuous improvement in everything we do on behalf of our team, our members and our industry, investing in growth and encouraging the development of those we work with and work for.



## Introduction

On April 7-8, 2025, the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas gathered leaders to engage in a strategy retreat to capture their vision for the organization, identify areas of focus, and set goals and metrics for the coming years. The outputs of the session are summarized in this document and provided as a resource to guide the work of the MRAA Board and Staff.

## Issues, Strengths, & Weaknesses

The participants discussed the critical issues facing the marine retail community in the next 5-7 years that must be of primary focus for the industry to survive and thrive and then identified six areas of priority with which they addressed the following questions:

- 1. What are critical strengths MRAA has as an organization that will allow it to lead in this issue area?**
- 2. What are gaps or weakness areas of MRAA today that could impact its potential to thrive as a leader in this issue area? How could the MRAA close those gaps?**
- 3. What strengths will MRAA need in the coming years to thrive as an association (in this area or broadly) — whether they already exist or they need to be developed?**
- 4. What are the most critical efforts MRAA could make to affect positive change and be the industry leader in this area?**
- 5. Is there anything MRAA should stop doing — anywhere across the organization — to create the capacity for leading in this area?**
- 6. Are there any efforts needed in the volunteer/leadership structure to support MRAA's efforts here?**

Summaries of the relevant insights per critical issue with original responses can be found in Appendix A.



## Possible Paths Forward

The work completed around the identified critical issues facing the marine retailing industry have implications both within and without this strategic framework.

- » Within the context of this strategy, the highlighted issues should be central places of focus for where MRAA leverages its strengths to serve the industry. In concert with the described organizational priority areas, incorporating MRAA's unique role in addressing each issue will further bring the value and relevance of the organization to the fore, for today and tomorrow.
- » The participants could have spent even longer time delving into each critical issue. MRAA could look to create space for further dialogue, learning, and action around each issue — serving as a hub of insight and collegial connection for a greater strength in addressing each one.



# 3-Year Picture, 1-Year Plan, 90-Day Rocks

(Taken from Traction – Get a Grip on Your Business by Gino Wickman. A book summary can be found [here](#).)

## **WHAT IS YOUR 3-YEAR PICTURE?**

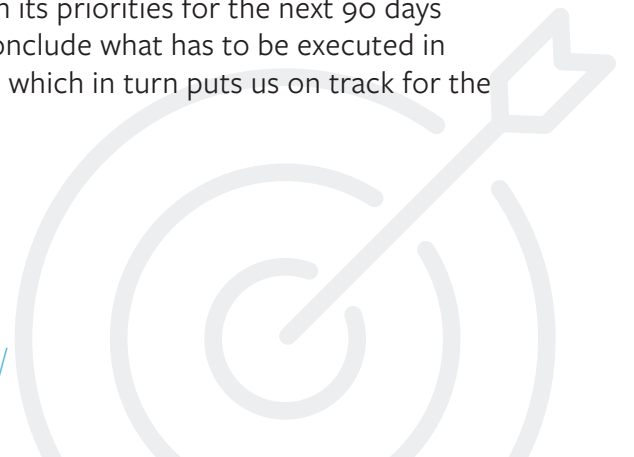
With life and business moving as fast as it does in the 21st century, there is little value in detailed strategic planning beyond a three-year window. Planning a 3-Year Picture greatly improves the one-year planning process. With the three-year picture clearly in mind, you can more easily determine what you have to do in the next 12 months to stay on track. MRAA's 3-Year Picture, as outlined during this strategic planning process, is highlighted through the following pages of this publication.

## **WHAT IS YOUR 1-YEAR PLAN?**

MRAA brings its long-range vision down to the ground to make it real. That means deciding on what must get done this year. Most companies make the mistake of trying to accomplish too many objectives per year. The Traction/Entrepreneurial Operating System approach enables MRAA to focus on a few goals rather than too many. By doing that, MRAA can actually accomplish more. That is the power of focus. MRAA's operational plan cascades the 3-Year Picture down to individual annual plans.

## **WHAT ARE YOUR QUARTERLY ROCKS?**

Once MRAA's one-year plan is clear, we narrow the vision all the way down to what really matters: the next 90 days. We determine what the most important priorities are in the coming quarter. Those priorities are called Rocks. Quarterly Rocks create a 90-Day world for MRAA, a powerful concept that enables us to gain tremendous traction. How do they work? Every 90 days MRAA's leadership team comes together to establish its priorities for the next 90 days based on our one-year plan. We discuss and ultimately conclude what has to be executed in the next quarter to put us on track for the one-year plan, which in turn puts us on track for the three-year picture, and so on.





## 3-Year Plan Vision Statements

Strategy planning participants described their individual visions of MRAA as a thriving, successful organization three years from now. The individual vision statements include the following themes: growth, leadership, advocacy, education, data-driven insights, dealer success, industry voice and future relevance.

### These are the 7 vision statements for MRAA's 3 Year Plan based on the themes:

1. MRAA is the trusted voice and leading advocate for marine retailers across North America.
2. Marine dealers view MRAA as an indispensable partner for education, certification, and growth.
3. MRAA drives innovation and delivers data-driven insights that empower smarter decisions and stronger dealer businesses.
4. Manufacturers and dealers collaborate seamlessly through MRAA to elevate customer experiences and retention.
5. MRAA leads workforce development, attracting and preparing the next generation of marine professionals.
6. Dealer Week stands as the premier event for learning, networking, and shaping the future of marine retail.
7. Through advocacy and education, MRAA ensures boating remains accessible, enjoyable, and sustainable for future generations.

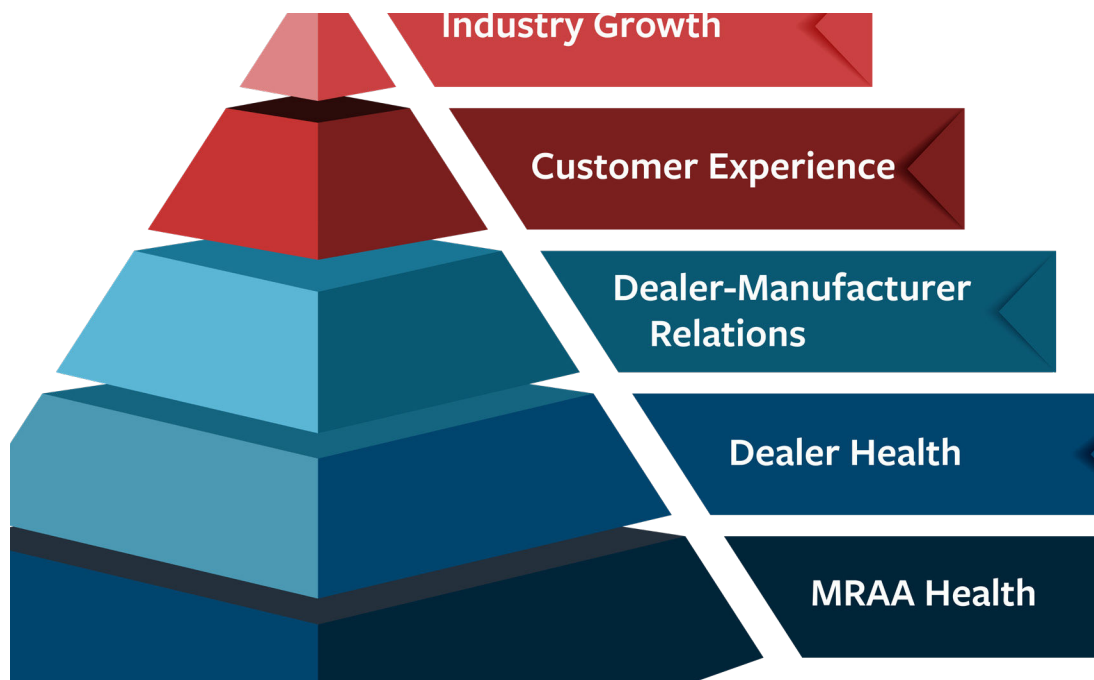


# Strategic Value Chain, Goal Areas, Framework and Deliverables

This segment of MRAA’s Strategic Plan report combines the Goal Areas, and the Strategies and Framework used, including the Statements of Desired Goal Achievement and Indicators of Success. If MRAA can align its deep bench of resources with a tighter, more accessible strategy—supported by benchmarks, focused messaging, and a stronger partner network—it has the potential to dramatically elevate dealer health, its core focus, across the industry. The MRAA Board should review these Goal Areas for alignment with its vision and mission statement, and the refined activities outlined here should be shared with the Board and used as a structure for quarterly reporting on progress against the goals.

The strategic priorities, identified as MRAA’s Strategic Value Chain and represented by the pyramid image below, structure the strategy in a logical flow: Focus on MRAA’s Health as the foundation, Dealer Health as the core of MRAA’s mission, Dealer-Manufacturer Relations as the necessary alignment; Customer Experience as the output, and Industry Prosperity as the apex of MRAA’s efforts. As the staff and leadership consider the following, the visions of success along with the vision and mission statements of the organization should remain top-of-mind.

## MRAA Strategic Value Chain





<b>Statement of Desired Goal Achievement</b>	What is it we are trying to accomplish?
<b>Indicators of Success</b>	In 3 years, how will we know we have accomplished our goal?
<b>Strategies</b>	What will we do? What actions will we take over time that correlate to success in achieving our goal?

# 1. MRAA Health

The health of the MRAA is the No. 1 priority. It is the foundation of all the work that MRAA performs on behalf of the industry.

<b>Area of Focus</b>	MRAA Health
<b>Statement of Desired Goal Achievement</b>	MRAA’s structure enables identification and anticipation of member needs and alignment of offerings that present impactful, easy-to-use solutions. MRAA engages and grows its membership by delivering exceptional value, fostering stronger connections, and ensuring the association is the trusted, go-to resource for marine retailers.
<b>Indicators of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Success will be measured by increased dealer engagement and member retention rates of 90% or better, demonstrating that MRAA is seen as a valuable and trusted resource.</li> <li>» Quantifiable metrics include membership growth (seeking 50% of the industry’s dealer locations in membership by year-end 2026), program utilization (metrics for all programs to be measured on weekly scorecards), and member feedback regarding the relevance and impact of MRAA’s offerings (feedback mechanisms to be installed in all MRAA programs).</li> <li>» Additionally, MRAA’s ability to proactively anticipate and address emerging member needs will be measured through the development and adoption of timely, effective solutions, including such metrics as time to market, utilization, and Net Promoter Scores.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Overhaul MRAA’s communication strategy, leveraging updated language that dealers and manufacturers can easily relate to and targeted segmentation supported by clean and complete industry data enabling timely, relevant communications that reach the right person at the right time with the right message.</li> <li>» Implement a robust customer satisfaction reporting system, utilizing data at every stage, to measure program/resource effectiveness, drive impactful changes, clearly articulate MRAA’s value proposition.</li> <li>» Develop a standardized evaluation framework to assess all internal products and operations.</li> </ul>



## 2. Dealer Health

<b>Area of Focus</b>	Dealer Health
<b>Statement of Desired Goal Achievement</b>	MRAA empowers marine dealers with engaging, timely education, actionable data, and strategic tools to build resilient, high-performing businesses that are prepared for change and offer rewarding experiences for both employees and customers.
<b>Indicators of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Increase LMS utilization, achieving over 50% engagement among members within three years, demonstrating the growing value and impact of its offerings.</li> <li>» Dealers reflect stronger business models that have been guided by data and insights MRAA has collected, curated and shared among the marine retailing community.</li> <li>» There is an increase in new MRAA dealer members and a 90% or better retention rate year over year, indicating broad satisfaction with the tools and resources accessible through MRAA membership.</li> <li>» Established a baseline Net Promoter Score for MRAA Membership, Education Programs, Certifications and Dealer Week and has demonstrated improvement year over year.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Collect a broader list of contacts at member dealerships to align MRAA offerings and benefits with specific dealership team members, enabling more targeted, impactful communication and improved member engagement accountability.</li> <li>» Identify and implement a vehicle to collect dealer performance data and establish benchmarks that allow MRAA to educate dealer members on key indicators of dealer health.</li> <li>» Add benchmarking opportunities to its services, enabling dealers to view performance against industry peers.</li> <li>» Implement an annual member feedback strategy that supports member retention through improved programs and services delivered through MRAA membership.</li> <li>» Leverage partnerships with engine manufacturers and floorplan finance companies to encourage MRAA membership as a key element of dealer development, positioning MRAA programs as essential tools for improving operational performance, profitability and long-term business success</li> </ul>



### 3. Dealer-Manufacturer Relationships

<b>Area of Focus</b>	Dealer-Manufacturer Relationships
<b>Statement of Desired Goal Achievement</b>	MRAA strengthens Dealer-Manufacturer relations in order to align go-to-market strategies and enhance both customer experience and customer retention.
<b>Indicators of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Active participation by 80 brands in the MRAA Scorecard program by manufacturers and dealers with a response rate from dealers of 75%.</li> <li>» Bring OEMs and dealers together for open honest communication regarding their issues and concerns in at least three specific events — at least one annually — leading to the development of education and tools to continue relationship improvement and a better customer experience.</li> <li>» Improved industrywide CSI, RECT and retention numbers</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Generate full sales, marketing, business and education plan for MRAA’s Dealer-Manufacturer Scorecards.</li> <li>» Design and execute a strategy for opportunities to convene and connect manufacturers and dealers or board members (to maintain a comfortable atmosphere for the OEMs to share openly) to build trust and come to better mutual understanding of their respective landscapes.</li> <li>» Analyze data from Dealer-Manufacturer Scorecard Program and produce data and education based on the results</li> <li>» Educate MRAA board and staff on the MRAA Scorecard program, allow the board to offer further feedback into the process</li> </ul>



## 4. Customer Experience

<b>Area of Focus</b>	Customer Experience
<b>Statement of Desired Goal Achievement</b>	MRAA drives meaningful impact on reducing boater attrition by delivering marine dealers and OEMs the programs, services, education, and tools that empower them to deliver better customer experiences.
<b>Indicators of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Demonstrate industrywide improvement in CSI, ESS, RECT and retention numbers</li> <li>» Demonstrate improvement in Dealer-Manufacturer Scorecard participation and average “dealer satisfaction” scores.</li> <li>» Increase participation in MRAA Certification Programs to XXX Certified Dealers, XX Certified Service Managers, XX Certified Service Advisors and XX Certified Sales Leaders.</li> <li>» We will have demonstrated year-over-year growth in MRAA’s new customer experience learning pathway.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Analyze data from MRAA’s Dealer-Manufacturer Scorecard Program and produce customer experience-related data and education based on the results, for both dealers and manufacturers.</li> <li>» Analyze comparative data between industry CSI scores and Certified Dealer Employee Satisfaction Scores to demonstrate the link between employee and customer satisfaction and focus content on helping dealers improve both.</li> <li>» Lead the development of education and tools to continue Dealer-OEM relationship improvement, in areas prioritized by their impact on improving the customer experience.</li> <li>» Create a learning pathway specifically dedicated to roles tied directly to customer experience, such as a Customer Experience Manager, to underscore the significance of this focus for dealership operators.</li> <li>» Analyze and evolve MRAA Certification Programs to ensure they meet today’s market needs related to the customer experience and customer retention and grow dealership participation in these programs.</li> </ul>



## 5. Industry Prosperity

<b>Area of Focus</b>	Industry Prosperity
<b>Statement of Desired Goal Achievement</b>	MRAA is recognized as the leading advocate and trusted partner for marine retailers and industry stakeholders by championing their interests, shaping policy, expanding participation, and equipping dealers with the tools, insights, and support they need to thrive in a dynamic marketplace.
<b>Indicators of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» We will have aggregated and shared data on churn of boaters exiting, while sharing methods to address these trends.</li> <li>» We have identified who is today’s boating consumer and how to appeal to the younger participants and how they consume boating differently.</li> <li>» We are the hub for learning about boating careers that dealers can use and share.</li> <li>» We’ve developed a strong grassroots network of dealers and MTAs to represent their boating interests.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Create and increase utilization of education for dealers to enhance and create a community experience.</li> <li>» Increase meaningful engagement and collaboration with Discover Boating/NMMA.</li> <li>» Creating marketing collateral for dealers to use at career fairs (e.g. videos, checklists, etc.)</li> <li>» Identify regions where MTA representation is lacking and where MRAA can nurture and develop more dealer voice.</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

During the strategy retreat, MRAA volunteer leaders produced several tools to guide the success of the organization over the coming years. As the Board considers and refines the output from the retreat, the following opportunities for further exploration exist:

- » Refine and adopt the new strategic priority areas with their goals and indicators
- » Build a parallel operations plan that aligns to the priority areas
- » Establish a regular system of measuring impact or programmatic impact against mission and finances
- » Design a strategic communication roll out for the new strategy elements, sharing them with the membership, volunteers, and allied organizations



## APPENDIX A – CRITICAL ISSUES SUMMARY

# Dealer Health

The operational and financial health of dealerships underpins the strength of the entire marine retail sector, and indeed, the industry at large. Dealers need better tools, education, and peer-to-peer learning to assess and improve their business practices—from cost structure to customer service delivery. There’s a growing recognition that strong dealer operations are essential for competing with other industries, meeting manufacturer demands and delivering consistent consumer experiences. MRAA has an opportunity to facilitate dealer health by sharing best practices, creating self-assessment tools, and supporting operational excellence across the network.

Dealer health sits at the heart of MRAA’s mission, and the organization is equipped with meaningful assets to lead in this space. It offers a broad and high-quality library of training resources, conducts impactful survey and data analytics, and has earned a reputation as a credible, collaborative partner within the industry. MRAA is seen as the authentic voice of the dealer—trusted to represent the frontline needs of marine retailers. Dealer Week offers an anchor event for knowledge-sharing and peer networking, while the MRAA Resource Center provides practical tools like job descriptions and templates that support dealership operations. MRAA Staff and peer relationships provide important 1:1 support and shared learning.

Still, many of these assets remain underutilized or poorly understood. A large segment of the dealer population either doesn’t know about MRAA or isn’t clear on what’s available to them. Information can be hard to find or is not well communicated. Even partner organizations and manufacturers—key allies in dealer development—are often unaware of the full scope of resources MRAA provides. For time-strapped dealers, especially smaller ones, the volume of content can feel overwhelming and misaligned with their immediate needs. There’s a clear call to narrow the focus, simplify the message, and improve how MRAA’s value is communicated and accessed.

To close these gaps, MRAA can take several key steps. First, it needs to strengthen connections across its ecosystem—ensuring that Education Champion Partners and Strategic Partners are fully briefed and equipped to promote MRAA offerings to the dealers they touch. Providing partners with easy-to-share summaries of pain points and aligned educational resources could improve

uptake. Second, MRAA can reframe membership as an investment in business performance, rather than a discretionary expense. Messaging should be simplified, focused, and engaging—reaching not just dealer principals but broader teams through the use of targeted campaigns.

Going forward, MRAA will need to invest in developing and promoting consistent benchmarks. Dealers need clear, simple metrics to understand their performance—and best practices to guide improvement. Core KPIs, when translated into useful tools and paired with foundational education (especially around financial literacy and operational basics), could significantly raise the floor for industry performance. There’s also a need to simplify and promote a “Dealership Health 101” framework that helps dealers understand key indicators of success.

Among the most important actions MRAA can take is creating more intentional peer-to-peer spaces—both at national events like Dealer Week and at smaller, regional gatherings. Dealers often listen to each other more readily than to formal education providers, and peer endorsements of MRAA’s tools and training carry more weight than promotional materials. Tapping respected voices within the industry to serve as ambassadors or influencers could enhance credibility and spark renewed interest. In addition, strengthening the network of regional meetings or communities would bring education and support closer to dealers’ day-to-day operations.

Internally, there’s a growing need for MRAA to focus. Trying to do too much across too many fronts can dilute impact. The organization should identify and concentrate on its highest-value offerings—those aligned with dealers’ most pressing business needs—and streamline communications and delivery around those core areas.

Volunteer and leadership structures can also help reinforce this focus. MRAA can lean more heavily on partners to amplify its message and extend its reach, including by attending and speaking at dealer meetings hosted by manufacturers and other stakeholders. These settings offer prime opportunities to reinforce MRAA’s value and build relationships with dealers who might otherwise remain on the margins.



# Dealer–Manufacturer Relationships

Strained communication and coordination between manufacturers and dealers are creating operational and reputational challenges. Dealers report frustration with warranty claims, order pressures, and a lack of streamlined support, while manufacturers continue to site shortcomings with dealer performance. The strained relationship threatens to negatively impact consumer loyalty to boating if the customer experience takes a back seat. Both dealers and manufacturers are calling for structured, collaborative dialogue and unified processes that connect manufacturers, suppliers, and retailers, ultimately to better serve the end customer.

Strong relationships between dealers and manufacturers are foundational to the health of the recreational marine industry—and directly impact the consumer experience. When those relationships are rooted in trust, transparency, and shared purpose, they drive consistent brand delivery, stronger customer support, and lasting loyalty. MRAA is uniquely positioned to help foster this alignment.

As a neutral convener, MRAA brings both parties to the table, gathers insights, and surfaces shared priorities. It already has deep access to the dealer network, and its emerging work in manufacturer engagement — through tools like the Dealer-Manufacturer Scorecard — has laid the groundwork for industry-wide improvements. MRAA’s ability to connect manufacturers and dealers in meaningful ways allows each group to hear what the other values and needs. These conversations don’t just strengthen business operations; they shape how the consumer experiences a brand.

At the same time, challenges persist. Dealers often carry multiple brands, and as that portfolio grows, the focus on any one OEM can diminish. Manufacturers, for their part, may struggle to maintain consistent messaging or support across their network. Without a shared set of expectations and standards—from warranty response times to communication practices—dealers and manufacturers risk creating disconnects that the customer feels most acutely. And while MRAA has a strong foundation, broader buy-in from OEMs and deeper engagement from non-member dealers are needed to make meaningful industry change.

To close those gaps, MRAA can expand its role as a systems-level connector and facilitator. Hosting an OEM

summit—with participation from both members and non-members—would send a clear message that this work is a shared priority. MRAA can also amplify the voice of the dealer in conversations with manufacturers, using real data to show where expectations align or diverge. Initiatives like trial memberships, co-branded outreach with MTAs, and leveraging OEMs as messengers for MRAA benefits can extend the association’s reach and relevance.

Looking ahead, success will depend on MRAA’s ability to translate data into meaningful action. The Dealer Scorecard is a promising tool—but it must evolve into more than a report. It should support benchmarking, enable direct feedback loops, and guide both parties toward better outcomes. MRAA has an opportunity to turn these insights into plans that strengthen performance and ultimately improve the end-user experience. When OEMs and dealers can see how aligning improves retention, loyalty, and reputation, the incentive becomes clear.

For MRAA to lead in this space, it must sharpen its messaging and refine delivery. The audience is busy, and attention is limited. Communications should rely less on volume and more on value: short, focused content—videos, visual data snapshots, and testimonials—that helps both manufacturers and dealers see the “why” behind the work. The content should always point back to the real-world result: a better experience for boaters.

MRAA may also need to pause certain initiatives to make space for this more focused work. That might mean scaling back general content production until there is clarity on what Manufacturers and Dealers truly need. It could also mean examining whether incentive-based partnerships—such as “refer X dealers, get Y” models—could grow membership while reinforcing alignment.

Finally, the right volunteer and leadership structures can reinforce this shift. Appointing “brand champions”—dealers and OEM reps who serve as liaisons for specific manufacturers or dealer groups—can create a feedback loop that is both strategic and operational. These individuals could collect insights, share best practices, and help guide others toward a stronger, shared standard.

In the end, MRAA has the tools, the trust, and the strategic positioning to help both sides move forward together.



# A

## Customer Experience

Dealers recognize that evolving customer expectations—shaped by other industries like automotive—demand a better, more seamless ownership experience. Customers expect transparency, clear communication, convenience, digital tools, and personalized support. If the marine retail experience doesn't meet those standards, boating will lose their trust. There's an urgent need to reframe the value of boating, improve service, and simplify the buying and ownership journey. Without significant progress, customer retention will continue to decline in an increasingly competitive discretionary spending landscape.

MRAA has a strong foundation for leading the industry in improving customer experience and retention. Its expansive library of educational resources, direct access to a broad dealer network, and deep bench of knowledgeable staff and board members give it significant reach and credibility. Additionally, MRAA's long-standing industry relationships provide a valuable platform for elevating the importance of customer experience.

Still, MRAA faces challenges that could limit its impact in this area. First, there's a general lack of awareness about MRAA and its resources, particularly among non-members. Even among members, smaller “mom and pop” dealerships often struggle to make full use of what's offered, either due to limited staffing or a mismatch between their capacity and the scale of available tools. Another critical gap is data. Without a clear, industry-wide picture of current customer experience benchmarks, it becomes difficult to guide improvement or measure success.

Addressing these issues will require intentional investment in data and accessibility. MRAA could significantly increase its value by offering more comparative data, leveraging existing CSI scores, for instance, to show how top- and bottom-performing dealers differ and what steps can lead to improvement. Capturing a baseline of where dealers are today in their customer experience practices will be essential to mapping the road ahead. This may involve customer focus groups, surveys, or working with external partners to access broader retail trend data. Making best practices more visible, digestible, and shareable will also support adoption and improvement across the network.

Looking forward, MRAA will need to enhance its data intelligence capabilities—both in collecting data and in transforming it into actionable insights. There's also a growing need for MRAA to provide turnkey solutions

and streamlined tools for resource-strapped dealerships. Delivering those tools with a clear value proposition will be key, particularly if MRAA wants to expand its influence. Creating a learning path specifically for roles tied to customer experience, such as a CX Manager or Service Coordinator, could further reinforce MRAA's leadership in this space.

Dealer engagement must also broaden. MRAA should be consistently bring more voices to the table, especially from underrepresented segments and involve Strategic Partners, Education Champions and Boat Brand Partners to support outreach and visibility. There's an opportunity to demonstrate the real-world impact of MRAA offerings by showcasing data comparisons between Certified Dealerships and non-certified dealers, or between MRAA members and non-members, especially in terms of customer outcomes.

To affect meaningful, positive change, MRAA must double down on efforts to capture and share data, build awareness of its programs, and increase participation in education and Certification. Creating space for peer comparison, where dealers can measure themselves against others, will help normalize the pursuit of better customer experiences. Expanding networking and best practice sharing will only amplify this momentum.

Supporting all of this will require thoughtful adjustments to volunteer and leadership structures. MRAA should consider increasing staff capacity for data collection and analysis, while also pursuing outside partnerships to help build a more robust data infrastructure. Volunteers can play a role in helping dealers understand and apply MRAA's tools by better segmenting and categorizing dealer types, and by helping articulate the benefits of improved customer service to both dealers and industry partners. When dealers perform better, manufacturers and suppliers benefit, creating a shared incentive for collaboration.

There is also a unique opportunity for MRAA to “force multiply” its efforts by aligning with other leading education providers in the marine industry. By amplifying success stories and highlighting the growth of dealers who have fully embraced professional development, MRAA can help establish a rising standard of excellence for customer experience across the sector.



# A

## The Future Boater

The marine industry is experiencing a demographic squeeze on both ends—its workforce is aging, and its customer base is increasingly skewing older. As Boomers phase out of boating, there's a critical need to reach and engage younger audiences who are not yet seeing boating as a viable lifestyle or priority. These younger potential boaters face more competition for time and money and lack exposure to boating culture. There's also a disconnect in how the industry markets to and educates new entrants, especially around affordability, financing, and ownership value. Without an intentional shift toward youth engagement, the future consumer base may erode.

MRAA is well-positioned to shape the marine industry's approach to attracting the next generation of boaters. One of its core strengths lies in its unique ability to reach and influence dealers of all sizes, helping align their communication strategies to better connect with younger, more diverse audiences. As an established educational platform, MRAA has the tools and expertise to gather information, translate it into actionable insights, and distribute it effectively across its network. The association's longstanding relationship with Discover Boating also provide a strong foundation for collaboration and alignment in messaging. MRAA's credibility and trust among dealers further strengthens its ability to elevate the importance of engaging future boaters in meaningful ways.

Despite these advantages, MRAA faces challenges that could limit its ability to lead in this space. While its connections to dealerships are strong, they often center more on senior leaders rather than individuals with marketing expertise. This creates a disconnect between MRAA's outreach efforts and the specific skills needed to engage younger audiences. There's also a lack of content—especially video—designed for marketing to future boaters, and many of MRAA's marketing resources are more general in nature. Additionally, current outreach to dealers is often perceived as sales-driven, rather than as a vehicle for delivering valuable, free content that supports long-term growth.

To close these gaps, MRAA does not need to become the industry's foremost expert in youth marketing, but it does need to take on the role of curator and distributor of best practices. This could begin with a dedicated team or task force focused specifically on the future boater challenge. By partnering closely with dealers who are already having success reaching younger consumers, MRAA can surface

real-world strategies and case studies that others can follow. Resources developed through this initiative should find a home in MRAA's LMS and be integrated into Dealer Week, ideally with fresh, disruptive speakers who bring new perspectives to the conversation.

Over time, MRAA will need to build new relationships with organizations and marketing professionals who have a direct line to future boating audiences. This will require the association to adopt more experimental approaches, including unconventional marketing tactics that break from industry norms. It will also need to produce more nimble, modern resources that are easy to use, visually compelling, and tailored to the expectations of a younger demographic. At the organizational level, MRAA may benefit from assigning ownership of this area to a specific staff person who is responsible for guiding strategy, overseeing implementation, and tracking results related to future boater engagement.

While no new critical efforts were captured in isolation, the group discussion emphasized that many of the priorities named—reallocating resources, shifting marketing strategies, and rethinking content delivery—are essential to driving future relevance. In order to make space for this evolution, MRAA may need to reassess its current content portfolio. There was some discussion about scaling back in areas such as Certification or traditional educational offerings, especially if those resources are underutilized or no longer aligned with the highest-impact opportunities. Doing so could free up internal capacity for more forward-looking campaigns aimed at future boaters.

Leadership and volunteer engagement will also need to evolve. Creating a dedicated subcommittee of the board to focus on the future boater challenge could provide accountability and visibility. Similarly, forming a volunteer task force of marketing professionals from across the marine industry could infuse MRAA's efforts with fresh thinking and greater executional muscle.

At its core, this is a question of relevance. The boating industry is changing, and its future consumers expect different things from brands, experiences, and community. MRAA has the trust, platform, and reach to lead—what it needs now is a commitment to bold thinking, targeted investment, and structural support to bring that vision to life.



# Workforce Development

The marine retail industry is facing a significant workforce challenge, marked by a shortage of skilled labor, difficulty attracting younger workers, and the growing complexity of dealership roles. Recruiting, training, and retaining talent has become harder, especially as many dealers juggle multiple responsibilities and lack formal HR processes. Staff need a higher level of skill to meet rising service demands and customer expectations, yet many applicants are either older or underprepared. Dealerships are calling for MRAA to step in with tools, training, and career awareness initiatives that can attract and develop the next generation.

MRAA enters the workforce development conversation with several strengths that uniquely position it to lead. The organization has demonstrated a strong capacity for producing high-quality, ready-to-use resources—templates, print materials, and video content—that can be easily adopted by dealers. These materials help communicate the appeal of careers in the marine industry in ways that individual businesses often cannot do on their own. MRAA also benefits from a wide-reaching member and partner network across the U.S. and Canada, allowing it to amplify messaging and extend the reach of its workforce materials.

Notably, MRAA's Young Leaders Advisory Council has prioritized workforce development, and the association is already recognized for its robust tools and credentials aimed at employee training and retention. Through its role in connecting dealers and manufacturers, MRAA is well-positioned to foster industry-wide collaboration, particularly in educational and development phases.

However, several critical gaps could limit MRAA's potential as a workforce leader if left unaddressed. The association does not currently have relationships with schools or organizations that would allow it to engage young people early in their career discovery journey. It lacks direct access to a sustainable pipeline of future employees and technical instructors and does not yet have industry-wide data on compensation or benefits—an increasingly important factor in a competitive labor market.

To close these gaps, MRAA could begin by surveying its member base and the broader industry to understand what compensation structures are in place and whether they are competitive with other skilled trades. This data would inform best practices and enable MRAA to guide dealers in building attractive compensation models,

particularly those that account for the seasonality of marine work. Strategic partnerships—with marine trades associations, technical schools, and other entities—will be essential for expanding awareness of industry careers.

Collaboration across the sector, particularly between dealers and manufacturers, will need to become a foundational strategy.

Looking ahead, MRAA will need to invest in expanded production capacity to generate video and digital resources at scale. It will also need to evolve its education and training offerings to help dealers manage service departments year-round, providing more consistent employment and compensation options. As workforce expectations shift, dealers will require support not just in recruiting but in building work environments that reflect modern standards around flexibility, stability, and learning.

Among the most impactful efforts MRAA can make is further developing [CareersInBoating.com](https://www.careersinboating.com) into a comprehensive platform for career exploration. This should include job listings, video testimonials, printable flyers, and materials that address both professional development and quality of life. MRAA can also help dealers navigate job fairs more effectively, providing them with marketing kits and guidance on how to present their businesses to a new generation of workers. Educational offerings should extend to late-career technicians who may need help adapting to new technologies and processes.

To create the capacity to lead in this space, MRAA must also assess what activities or resources are underperforming. A data-driven review of engagement across current offerings can help determine where to divest or sunset efforts that no longer serve the workforce mission. At the same time, the volunteer and leadership structures should be aligned to support these efforts. Assigning dedicated volunteers to catalog relevant job fairs or compile essential recruitment tools would add efficiency and consistency to this work.

Ultimately, workforce development for the marine industry will depend on a clear strategy across three stages: recruitment, development, and retention. MRAA has a strong foundation but must now evolve to meet rising challenges. If it succeeds, it can become the central force driving not just workforce conversations but workforce solutions across the entire sector.



# A

## Advocacy, Access & Activity

Boating's future depends on access to water, yet that access is shrinking due to regulations, reduced marina space, dock slip limitations, and local restrictions on water use. These barriers, combined with rising environmental and zoning pressures, are making it harder for customers to enjoy boating—undermining both enthusiasm and participation. The industry must advocate more forcefully at the local and national levels to preserve and expand access. Without proactive action, even interested boaters may find themselves priced out, restricted, or discouraged from participation altogether.

MRAA is well-positioned to grow into a leading advocacy voice for the marine retail sector, particularly when it comes to issues of water access and legislative activity. The association's dealer network is uniquely suited to this role—not just because of its national footprint, but because it is deeply embedded in local communities across a wide and politically diverse geography. This puts MRAA in a stronger position than many peer organizations to activate dealers in key districts and turn them into effective grassroots advocates. Additionally, MRAA's relationships with policymakers and other industry associations offer a solid foundation for expanding influence.

MRAA's advocacy team is already known for helping dealers stay ahead of regulatory and legislative threats. However, the challenge now is to build broader engagement and ownership among members themselves. Many dealers still don't realize they can play a meaningful role in shaping outcomes, or they feel uncertain about how to get started. There's an intimidation factor that often keeps them on the sidelines, and that also applies to consumers—who may be directly affected by water access issues but remain disconnected from advocacy efforts.

To overcome these barriers, MRAA needs a more robust, omni-channel strategy for educating and mobilizing its members. Messaging should be simple, practical, and confidence-building. Dealer testimonials could be a powerful tool—highlighting how easy and impactful it is to get involved. Regular communication—through video, podcasts, webinars, or live sessions—should spotlight how advocacy works, what MRAA is doing, and how members can help. Reinforcing that the advocacy team is a supportive partner, will help reduce friction and increase trust.

Looking ahead, MRAA will need additional capacity—both in staffing and funding—to grow its advocacy work effectively. The association should continue building dealer-specific expertise within its advocacy team, so that messaging and engagement strategies resonate directly with MRAA's core audience. Growing the grassroots ambassador program will be critical. Dealers who are visible, vocal, and credible in their communities can serve as powerful extensions of MRAA's reach and legitimacy. The goal is to create demand from dealers themselves—a recognition that advocacy is not just an obligation but an opportunity.

One of the most important efforts MRAA can make is clearly articulating what advocacy actually achieves. Members need to understand how this work protects their businesses, preserves water access, and shapes a more favorable operating environment. Content that demystifies the legislative process and connects it directly to outcomes will help bridge the gap between policy and practice.

At the same time, MRAA should be cautious about mission creep. With finite resources, the organization must focus its advocacy efforts on issues that are directly aligned with its mission and most relevant to its members. Stretching into areas that feel only loosely connected to dealer interests could dilute the impact and credibility of the program.

From a leadership and volunteer standpoint, MRAA's advocacy staff will benefit from strategic guidance on navigating more controversial issues—especially those that straddle dealer-manufacturer relationships once they enter the legislative realm. Clear boundaries and decision-making frameworks will be important in managing risk and maintaining trust. Volunteers and ambassadors can also play an expanded role, particularly in educating fellow dealers, sharing calls to action, and serving as liaisons between local concerns and national priorities.

As regulatory challenges increase and water access becomes more contested, MRAA has a real opportunity to lead. With the right mix of education, engagement, and strategic focus, the association can build a grassroots advocacy engine that is not only responsive—but proactive, influential, and dealer-driven.