



North American Hardware and Paint Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Scott Sommers Receives 2023 Top Guns Award From NHPA

March 27, 2023, *INDIANAPOLIS*—Scott Sommers has found success building on the foundation of service to customers and the community that his grandfather Harold Miller Sr. and uncles Harold Miller Jr. and Wayne Miller started in 1972 at Hartville Hardware. Now, Sommers' achievements have led to him being named a 2023 Top Guns Award honoree by the North American Hardware and Paint Association (NHPA).

Top Guns honorees are chosen for their commitment and passion for the independent home improvement channel. They are pillars of innovation and have helped grow their businesses through strategic leadership with consideration for their communities and their teams. This year's honorees were specifically chosen for their focus on utilizing technology to improve operations.

"These Top Guns Award winners exemplify what it means to be a successful home improvement retailer, especially when it comes to utilizing technology in their operations," says NHPA president and CEO Bob Cutter. "We are excited to honor their accomplishments and the ways they positively impact their operations and communities."

Saying his work colleagues are like family is actually true and not just a cliché for Sommers. At Hartville Hardware & Lumber, where he serves as president, he works every day with his brother, uncles, cousins and other family members, and he credits the company's positive culture as a driving force for success.

Part of that culture is authentically connecting with employees, empowering them and allowing them to take ownership in their roles. HRM Enterprises, the umbrella organization of Hartville Hardware & Lumber, has over 900 employees across all entities, and with that many employees, it can be difficult to stay in touch with everyone, Sommers says.



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To solve the issue, Sommers says they started “20 Group Meetings,” where one time a year, Sommers and other leadership team members meet with 20 employees at a time. These groups of 20 create an opportunity for employee connection and ensure changes are implemented smoothly and have the desired impact.

“These meetings are a way for us to discuss concerns, answer questions and continue promoting our culture,” Sommers says. “We also continue to connect employees with our three strategic anchors: best place to work, best guest experience and long-term sustainable results.”

In terms of technology, Sommers says their strategy is to be a “fast follower” and adapt to new technologies that other businesses have found success using and also make sense for their operation. The company has found success in technology because they have been able to devote the necessary time and energy.

“One of the things we realized quickly is that we need to have people focused on technology,” Sommers says. “For example, e-commerce isn’t something you can do part time and be successful. We have 13 people on the development and IT side of the business and another 15 employees focused on digital marketing—putting content on the website, doing the marketing behind it, creating graphics and everything.”

Another component that has made Hartville Hardware & Lumber successful is Sommers’ use of analytics to assess all areas of the operation. Sommers is continually looking at data from various departments, endcaps and other parts of the store to see what areas are most productive and which ones need improvement.

“I give credit to Howard and Wayne for starting this culture of tracking a wide variety of data to see how our company measures up,” Sommers says. “They also get all the credit for showing what it means to truly empower your employees—they both did that exceedingly well.”

Looking back over his career, Sommers attributes much of his success to his uncles and grandfather, who set the stage for a company that cares for its employees, customers and community.

“I would be remiss if I didn’t give credit to my wife, Kami,” Sommers says. “Her hard work in our home has allowed me to give focus to the business here.”

His family at work—both blood and chosen—has also made him and the company successful.



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“The team I get to work with every day is so special,” he says. “They are the boots on the ground who make us tick, and the visible leadership from our managers and in our sales team is just tremendous. They are what really makes us.”

While he is grateful to receive the Top Guns honor, Sommers shies away from all the glory.

“This award means a lot, but I think our team deserves it,” he says. “They have worked hard to build this place over the years, and I’m excited and humbled to accept it for the whole team.”

In addition to Sommers, two other retailers were named Top Guns Award honorees: TJ Colson, president of Wilco Stores, which operates 25 retail farm stores in Oregon, Washington and California, and Eric Hassett, president of Hassett Hardware, which operates five stores in the San Francisco Bay Area. Each of the honorees will be featured in upcoming issues of *Hardware Retailing* and *Paint & Decorating Retailer* magazines. Top Guns honorees will also participate in a panel presentation at the 2023 NHPA Independents Conference on Aug. 2-3 in Dallas to discuss their technology strategies. During the conference, they will also be honored at an awards reception sponsored by STIHL and the National Hardware Show.

For more information on the Top Guns Awards, visit YourNHPA.org/top-guns. To learn more about the 2023 NHPA Independents Conference and register to attend, visit YourNHPA.org/conference.

About the North American Hardware and Paint Association

Founded in 1900 by a group of retailers, NHPA is a not-for-profit trade association whose mission is to help home improvement, paint and decorating outlets in the U.S. and Canada become better and more profitable retailers. Governed by a board of independent hardware and paint retailers, NHPA fulfills its mission by providing how-to management resources, product discovery, training programs and networking opportunities for the industry it serves. Learn more at YourNHPA.org.

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