

# General Session Successful Ranges and Attendee Feedback

## Case Studies of Successful Ranges: State Ranges

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*Below are common questions dealing with shooting ranges and various answers to them from successful range operators.*

What are the most innovative, unique and effective mechanisms that you can employ to make your range successful?

- *Allow youth groups to use the range for free. Groups such as scouts, Royal Lancers, Youth Hunter Ed Challenge and school trap teams should have access to the range during non-public shooting times, usually on weekends. This avoids conflict or competition with public shooters.*
- *Provide free range use for law enforcement if conducted as training and pre-scheduled in advance. These events emphasize the range's commitment to firearm safety in the community, and these shooters also become part of our public shooting base.*
- *Programs, such as Ladies Safety Classes, Ladies Shoot Free Thursdays, Bring a Friend to the Range Day, National Hunting and Fishing Day, Dad's Shoot Free on Father's Day (if a child brings them); and programs with Bass Pro, such as WOW, Wonders of the Outdoor World; family camp and other such events help shooters feel they get more shooting than they are paying for. Use of Firearms Training Systems (FATS) equipment at the larger events is always a popular user activity.*

How do you measure success?

- *Success is measured by the number of shooters, but also by the number of times the media utilizes the range as an expert source for firearms information; compliments on how safely the range is operated by the shooters; the number of families and the increasing number of women who come to the range by themselves to shoot.*
- *Our Ladies Safety Classes have been going on for six or seven years with a lot of the participants coming as referrals from others who have taken a class.*
- *At our Springfield range, the skeet shooter numbers have increased enough to warrant adding a third skeet range, and our St. Louis ranges are enjoying a steady increase in user numbers.*
- *The Training Center concept also is expanding to two more areas in Missouri where ranges are being built. The shooting public has accepted the concept of a range that has a staff to supervise the shooters and offer opportunities for seminars related to hunting taught by trained staff.*

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- *The number of shooters who regard long lines and waits to shoot prior to deer season as part of their deer season tradition also is surprising. Some even bring coffee and donuts.*

Has your range developed any formal plans? If so, please describe what they are and how you went about developing and/or updating them. What are their components? How have they been helpful in making your range successful?

- *Each range is responsible for developing its operating plan. We do have some basic programs in common, but because of the varying demographics of each range, we each have specific groups and operation procedures unique to our areas. Variances might include days and hours for public shooting.*
- *On a statewide basis, we always are looking for opportunities to expand our unmanned ranges, reviewing plans to build new training centers or make expansions or improvements to existing centers.*
- *Sometimes politics play a role in how quickly plans are initiated. Everything has to go through a budget process where it must compete for funding with other department projects, such as new lakes, nature centers, prairie areas or office buildings.*

Does your range have a training or orientation program for members, officers or staff that includes a customer relations component? If so, please describe.

- *Our department provides training programs and continuing education programs that are required or optional for some, depending on their job responsibilities. For range staff, courses such as Dealing with Difficult People, Customer Relations and Handling Stressful Situations are required.*
- *Each range has their own employee orientation procedure, but all include range operation procedures, departmental policies, position duties and responsibilities.*
- *We try to utilize people that have taught in our state hunter education program, retired law enforcement and/or shooters to fill our employment needs.*

Do you have a formal process to identify and solicit suggestions from customers? If so, please describe.

- *All of the ranges are accessible via e-mail directly to the range or through the State of Missouri web page. There are comment boxes, and our shooters, knowing that we are a state entity, have been very willing to let us know what they think. We have to reply to any communications that are addressed to us.*
- *Shooters who know that you are willing to assist them while they are on the range are willing to talk with you on a one-on-one basis, with compliments or complaints.*

How do you handle dissatisfied customers?

- *Work with them directly. When a shooter is unhappy about his range experience, it usually is because of a misunderstanding or disregard of a range rule.*

- *When a shooter arrives to check in and is assigned a shooting booth or trap range, we go over the range shooting regulations list, place the person who signs the range ticket in charge of the group. We let them know that they arrived as a group and, if an infraction of the rules occurs, they will be asked to leave as a group.*
- *We stress the safety objectives of our rules and subsequent dangers if we do not enforce them. We then solicit their agreement and support.*

Many ranges typically have a “keep a low profile” attitude with regard to being visible within the community. What are the pros and cons of this attitude? Would you recommend changing this attitude? If so, please describe how you would change it?

- *We must stay visible in the community through schools, business fairs, special youth programs and adult firearms safety programs. We are always looking for more visibility and positive ways to be seen by the public.*
- *Our biggest problem as shooters is that we preach to the choir, and we are not doing a good job of selling our merits to non-shooters. When the public is getting a lot of negative images of shooters, hunters and firearms, we need to be aggressively visible rather than passively low profile. Our major problem is getting the media to publicize everything we want stressed.*
- *As managers of shooting facilities, we have to be media wise to get our point across; we have to be polished and professional and put forth a business-like image, and present our facts in a manner that non-shooters will comprehend.*

In many cases, an organization is judged by how it reacts to adversity. Does your range have a crisis management plan in the event of some unforeseen event? Some of our considerations include:

- *When managing an outdoor range, our crises range from fires started by incendiary bullets in drop zones, to protesters wishing to stop a managed hunt that we are involved in, to the Red Cross wanting the range closed for the day during a dirt bike festival, to a shooter being injured while on the range.*
- *For those events occurring during the time that shooters are on the range, the range officer will stop all shooting, require all shooters to unload firearms and exit the shooting booths or trap areas.*
- *The range officer responds to the incident site, makes it safe, evaluates the extent of any injury and calls 911 with the information gathered. Necessary care is given until professional help arrives. From this point, information and statements are taken, and our Department Incident Investigation format begins.*
- *All incidents require a written report detailing the possible cause, people involved, actions taken by range staff and resolution of the incident or event while in areas under departmental jurisdiction.*