

## Finding new revenue in service

Dealers are finding that reusable boat covers can help them do more business.

**W**ith boat sales lagging, it's more important than ever that boat dealers find ways to maximize other sources of revenue, and Transshield, Inc. believes its custom-fit boat covers can help dealerships do just that.

Transshield covers perform like more traditional shrink-wrap film covers – in that they can be shrunk to provide a tight fit. But what makes the covers unique is that they can still be removed if it becomes necessary to access the boat for any reason, and then reapplied.

For dealerships that offer their customers storage during the offseason, the ease of access Transshield covers allow also provide them with the opportunity to sell those customers more service work during the winter months, when business is slow and budgets are even tighter.

"This is a much faster, easier way to do it," says Brent Wiczek, general manager of Minnesota's Nisswa Marine. "We can sell a guy upholstery work, we can sell him a detail that we're confident we're going to get to."

Nisswa Marine has provided boat storage for more than 40 years and now stores nearly 600 boats each winter. Wiczek says the dealership first began using Transshield covers two years ago and covered 20 to 30 boats with them. Last year, the company "Transshielded" 60 to 70 boats – those it knew it was going to be performing service work on – and shrink wrapped the others. This year, Wiczek says Nisswa will cover all of its storage boats with the Transshield product.

"One of our problems before was that we could sell a lot of service to these people," Wiczek says, "but then sometimes getting at these boats when they were shrink wrapped or in a storage building took us longer than it did to do the work."

Matt Peat, Transshield's vice president of sales and marketing, says his company's covers help prevent the logjam dealers often experience in the spring when customers all want their boats to be clean and ready to use at the same time.

*Dealers say it takes about half the time to apply a Transshield cover to a boat than it does using traditional shrink-wrap film.*



"We have some dealers who are taking the time to look at the boat before they wrap it up and make a list of things that could be worked on," he explains. "And then they call in January, but he's thinking about his boat, but he's obviously not anywhere near it, and tell him, 'I can do this and this for you.'"

### Benefits vs. costs

When Transshield first began manufacturing the material its covers are made of, the company intended it to cover products that were being transported (cars, boats, etc.) and because of that Transshield covers can be used on anything with a "Class A" finish. Peat says the inner layer (there are three: polyethylene shrink/stretch film on the outside, olefin hot-melt adhesive in the middle and hydroentangled polyester nonwoven on the inside) won't harm a boat's gelcoat.

"Conventional shrink-wrap film can be like a very fine grit sandpaper," Peat says. "It can be shrunk down tight, but still that little bit of movement can cause damage."

The ease with which a Transshield cover can be applied has also helped Nisswa Marine become more efficient

in its operations. It takes the company's employees about half the time to cover a boat with the Transshield product than it does using shrink-wrap film.

"We all understand that boat sales are off and I've looked at how do I do a better job so I'm more efficient, so I'm more profitable in what I have to work with," Wiczek says. "And that's one of the things I've seen. If you need to frame up a typical 22-foot boat and then either shrink wrap or Transshield it, they can do the Transshield probably 20 to 25 minutes faster."

The benefits of the product do come with a price, however. Peat says using Transshield to cover a standard runabout costs two-and-a-half to three times more than using regular shrink-wrap. And some dealers simply don't want to pay more and/or prefer the revenue that comes from shrink wrapping a boat fresh each year rather than using a Transshield cover, which can last two seasons.

"What they don't take into consideration is labor, strapping, tape, the vents and everything else that goes into that regular shrink-wrap," Peat says. "It still doesn't close the gap completely, but it certainly gets us a lot closer. And then the upsell can finish the gap." ❧