

HMAVIEWPOINT

Is the hobby industry turning the corner?



Alan Bass
Stevens International,
HMA Board of
Directors

The last 15 months in the hobby industry certainly started as some of the most tumultuous that we can remember. With the number of viable hobby distributors having decreased by one, hobby retailers nationwide felt a significant impact. Everyone scrambled to find new sources to keep products on their shelves. Retailers worried daily that they would be unable to keep their inventory well stocked, while our manufacturers were concerned about their viability after losing a large customer. Admittedly, there were times that we at Stevens International were significantly worried about the health of our small, niche industry.

But as 2018 progressed and we moved into 2019, our fear and worry turned into relief and optimism. Nearly every small domestic supplier that we've spoken to has marveled that their sales in 2018 actually increased from the previous year and that they are more than making up the lost volume through other sources. And, from conversations with our dealers and through our own data, the 2018 holiday season was arguably the best since the recession. As a whole, the year seems to have been a turn-around sales year for hobby retailers, and we continue to hear of good results from most of our customers.

As 2019 moves along, we are increasingly optimistic. Many retailers have already informed us that January was one of the best starts to a year in recent memory, with many of our suppliers sharing the sentiment. That makes us not only happy as a company in our day-to-day operations, but as an association, it instills us with the confidence to move forward.

This year, the HMA plans to power forward into the future, with most of our over-publicized issues now behind us. Our new president, Peter Vetri, along with our Board of Directors, have begun to adopt aggressive campaigns to help grow the various facets of our industry.

As we move forward, we are looking forward to the HMA being what everyone has always expected: an avenue through which the hobby industry can promote our products, lobby public officials for the benefit of our manufacturers and retailers, and continue growing the hobbies about which we are all so passionate.

The hobby industry is small, and one of our most important duties is to always work together to grow it. As Stevens International enters its 43rd year in business (and as our family enters its 63rd in the hobby industry), we are always thankful for the love and support of those around the hobby industry and what this industry has provided for our family and our employees over the last half-century. We find that one of the best ways we can give back is by supporting the HMA and the programs that will ultimately help grow our hobby. **HM**



Hobby Manufacturers Association

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