



Kids who spend time on the water often become boat owners, but that trend is changing among Gen Xers and millennials.

Pursuing lost youth

Gen Xers and millennials who enjoyed the water as kids have fallen off the traditional ownership path, and the industry wants them back

EDITOR'S NOTE: This begins a two-part special report on the industry's declining baby-boomer client base and the reluctance of the next generations to commit to boat ownership.

People who grow up boating will always boat. That's the message the industry has been sending in its effort to get more people on the water as kids. And for good reason. Traditionally, many of the people who grow up boating eventually become boat owners themselves. But what was a given in the past doesn't seem to translate to the pattern for the future.

The reality is that the age of people who buy new and used boats is not going down, according to new data from Info-Link, a Miami-based company that analyzes data gleaned from boat registrations. The average boat owner was 55.5 in 2015, says Info-Link founder Jack Ellis. The average new-boat buyer last year was 51.5, which is actually a bit lower than the peak in 2013, when it was 52.5.

"So from a buyer's perspective, there's actually been a slight decline in the age of new-boat buyers," Ellis says.

"But part of that is due to an increase in PWC sales." When those buyers are removed, the age of new-boat buyers is 52.8, down slightly from the high in 2013 and 2014 at 53.1.

"What is encouraging if you think about this is: We've got millions of people who are currently millennials or Gen Xers who grew up boating," Ellis says. "We don't really need to sell them on the sport. They already like it."

But that enjoyment of the water is not transitioning to boat sales. During any five-year period in the past 20 years there have been about 15 million boat owners, Ellis estimates. Assuming conservatively that 10 million were married with children and that the average home has 2.5 kids, that means 25 million people have been exposed to boating who are now at the point where they can invest in a boat.

"Naturally, we as an industry want to get people excited about boating," says Ellis, "but we do have this whole, relatively large group of people who are like, 'Yeah, we love boating, but we're not going to buy a boat.' So the challenge is, how do we get them boating? I think boat rentals, clubs, and even some things that don't exist yet, are going to take off to serve that market. There are mil-



There are millions of people under 40 who love boating, but the number who are buying boats isn't what the industry would like it to be.

lions of people under 40 who know boating is great. They're just not buying boats. Maybe they're using mom and dad's boat. Statistically speaking, there's got to be millions of them."

With all the data regarding boat sales, and ownership, and marketing to generations, and dual-working households, and time spent on devices, and time spent on kids' activities — as far as we know, no one has sat down and asked people ages 28 to 46 who grew up boating why they don't have a boat and whether they plan to buy one.

So we decided to ask a few people ourselves. We found a half-dozen childhood boaters who were willing to talk about why they have not chosen to pursue the lifestyle through boat ownership. Not shockingly, time and expense were the most cited reasons for not having a boat. But how those interviewed painted the picture might come as a surprise.

'Purely a price thing'

"I've had the opportunity to buy a little boat," says Sarah Patrick, a 34-year-old who lives in Sister Bay, Wis., and grew up boating in Southern California with her family. "They're just so expensive. It's purely a price thing. And it's a time issue. I'd love to even live aboard a boat, but it's cheaper to have a house."

Patrick ran down a laundry list of expenses that come with boat ownership — fuel, winterization, hauling in the fall, launching in the spring, a slip or a mooring. "I have a friend who bought a boat and didn't even take it out of storage last summer," she says. "It's like owning a home. There's a lot of hidden fees."

Like many in the 1980s, Patrick's mother was a stay-at-home mom, so she could do maintenance during the week. But Patrick, who works full time, worries that she wouldn't have time to invest. "If you're thinking you're going out two or three times a summer on a boat, you're better off chartering," she says. "If you're investing in a boat, you have to make it a lifestyle. You can't just make it a hobby."

"People my age who are buying boats did not grow up on boats. They enjoy boats and say, let's have a boat, and then they sell them in a few years once they find out how demanding it is. It's a lot of upkeep," Patrick says. "The boat salesman can sell me on the lifestyle all he wants, but I know all those things he's not telling me. I know the demands on my time, my wallet and all the other things he's not telling me. It's like trying to sell ice to an Eskimo."

Neysa McNamara, a 38-year-old teacher who lives in Natick, Mass., where her husband was raised (and a town over from where she grew up), used to spend long weekends and vacations with her sister and parents at their house in Maine, where they kept a sailboat. They have since traded in the sailboat for a Grady-White, McNamara says, adding that she would be more apt to buy a powerboat if she were going to get a boat.

But "it isn't even on my radar," McNamara says, despite the fact that her 4- and 6-year-olds love being on her parents' boat when they visit. "It's a lot of upkeep,

and then you have to store it for the winter," she says. "My parents get their boat painted, cleaned. They pay for the mooring to keep it on the water all summer."

'Totally a luxury'

Buying a boat had never occurred to 28-year-old Jonathan King, a single photographer and musician in York, Maine,

who grew up boating with his parents and sister. "I never really thought about it," King says. "I would consider buying a boat myself, but at the moment I'm not able to afford it. That's really the only reason, I guess, that I wouldn't have a boat. I know how to dock it, understand the currents in the ocean, and definitely that comes from growing up on boats. For me,

it feels natural to be on or in the water.

"It's such a strange industry," King adds. "It's totally a luxury. People have boats to spend their free time on, and a lot of people these days don't have free time. I feel like living on a boat is a sweet alternative way to live, possibly. It's a lot, though. It's got to [cost] more than a mortgage on a house."

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'Maybe when we're retired'

Samantha Larkin, 40, who is also single, works in the luxury clothing industry as a sales manager and buyer, and in late February she was closing on her first home, on Long Island, N.Y. Though she says she has "salt water running through my veins," she has zero plans to buy a boat. "My first picture on a boat is me at 9 months old, propped up on the top of a Mercury outboard," she says. Larkin grew up on Long Island during her early youth on her parents' 39-foot Cigarette before they traded for a 35-foot Sea Ray Sundancer. When she was 10, her mother decided it would be proper for her to learn to sail, so she went off during summers to sailing camp at the local yacht club.

Yet Larkin isn't buying a boat. "Lord knows" the financial investment is huge, she says. "And the time element, too. Most people work, a lot. And in most families I know, both parents work full time, which leaves little time after work, and that time is filled with chores like laundry and grocery shopping."

"Maybe when we're retired and have more time, and more money," McNamara says in a noncommittal tone. "Right now the craziness of us both working and having little kids. My husband works all the time. And we have two little ones. We don't ever talk about buying a boat."

Jackie Gonzales, 45, of Kingston, N.Y., grew up with a 23-foot Chris-Craft that her family would take on Lake George, N.Y., as well as cruising to Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket and Cape Cod, Mass., and around Long Island, N.Y. She would love to own a boat with her 49-year-old husband, Rick, and two boys, William, 8, and Charlie, 6, but says they can't afford it.

"Our 8-year-old is on the autism spectrum, and New York lacks in autism insurance reform, so in this instance, when I say we can't afford it, there is no aspect of it that we could manage," Gonzales says. "The irony is, the times he's been on a boat, he's been animated and engaged. He loves to swim and all things aquatic. Perhaps it's a hereditary trait."

Covering the therapies, which are considered elective, has caused the family to default on her student loans, sell their home and rent something smaller. "The world and culture of boating, and specifically those who boat, are so out of touch with the daily struggles of paycheck-to-paycheck living," Gonzales says. "I can't afford to take the time off to enjoy a boat, let alone own one."

Burdensome debt

Alex Lastra, a 46-year-old who lives in South Florida, says the recession has hit a lot of people from Generation X and millennials harder than the industry understands. "A lot ... are burdened with student loan debt and do not have the disposable income," Lastra says.

McNamara says she and her husband recently finished paying their student loans, and like many, she says they were hoodwinked into rolling their loans in together, costing them thousands in interest because some of them were subsidized or interest-free, thanks to government programs. Rolling them together can negate that.

A survey from Citizens Financial Group in 2014 found that although the standard repayment plan for student loans puts borrowers on a 10-year track, research has shown that the average bachelor's degree holder takes 21 years to pay them off.

Generation X was hit hardest by the recession, says Thom Dammrich, president of the National Marine Manufacturers Association. "The millennials are still very young. They've got time. It's the Gen Xers, who are a bit older, in their 40s, they've got kids, and the housing market just crushed them during the recession. Job losses crushed them," Dammrich says. "Millennials' biggest problem is student debt, but the Xers have student debt, also. I've talked and written about this before and really believe as a country it's something we've got to [deal with]."

Even though the industry is attempting to design more value-oriented products, the vast majority will



The family togetherness recreational boating inspires has always been one of its strongest selling points.

not be able to afford even those, Dammrich says. "I don't think they have the money. I think the money is going to pay off student loans," he says. "Millennials are delaying marriage and automobile purchases, and if they're delaying automobile purchases, they're certainly delaying boat purchases. I don't think they're delaying these things because they're putting money in the bank and creating a nest egg. They're delaying them because they're not in the financial position to do them."

'A different world'

Generation X and millennials also say they're working longer hours, with both parents holding jobs in many cases. "It's a different world now. It's a different time," says McNamara. "I think back to my childhood, and I think because my mom stayed home when we were young, I don't know, it didn't seem so crazy. I feel like everyone is rushing and busy. I think you're very lucky if you can say, 'Oh, let's buy another house and buy a boat.' We don't have any friends that have a boat or a house on the water. It's just so hard. It's just different these days, where you have two people working so hard just to make ends meet."

Generation X entered the workforce during the recession of the 1990s, and then, just as they were getting their footing, the dot-com bubble burst. As the housing market picked up in the 2000s, some bought homes at high prices, only to see real estate values plummet during the financial crisis.

Although the stock market has rebounded, real wages, after factoring in inflation, haven't improved for most employees since before the recession, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Twenty-three percent of Gen Xers received no raise and 26 percent just a 1 or 2 percent bump in the past 12 months. Millennials were the hardest-hit during the Great Recession, losing almost half their wealth when the stock market slumped, compared with about 25 percent for baby boomers, according to a 2013 Pew Charitable Trusts survey.

Further and further behind

Billionaire venture capitalist Nick Hanauer penned a controversial essay for Politico in 2014 and expounded on it for PBS last year, saying the absence of overtime pay for salaried workers is bad for the economy.

"If you're in the American middle class — or what's left of it — here's how you probably feel. You feel like you're struggling harder than your parents did, working longer hours than ever before, and yet falling further and further behind. The reason you feel this way is

because most of you are — falling further behind, that is. Adjusted for inflation, average salaries have actually dropped since the early 1970s, while hours for full-time workers have steadily climbed," Hanauer wrote, echoing McNamara's statements.

In 1975, 62 percent of full-time salaried workers, including a majority of college graduates, were eligible for overtime pay, according to the Department of Labor. Because only 11 percent of salaried workers — those making less than \$23,660 (below the poverty line of \$24,008 for a family of four) — qualified for overtime pay, "business owners like me have been able to make the other 89 percent of you work unlimited overtime hours for no additional pay at all," Hanauer wrote. "In the absence of a law requiring me to pay you overtime, if you earn under a certain amount, you end up working harder — and the harder you work, the fewer employees I need. The fewer employees I need, the higher the unemployment rate. The higher the unemployment rate, the more leverage I have to 'encourage' you to 'do what it takes' to keep your job. And so you work even more hours, pushing unemployment up and wages down."

Bigger than boating

A Department of Labor proposal to require overtime for those making as much as \$50,440, expected to be ruled on late this year, has been criticized on both sides of the aisle. Student loan debt exceeded credit card debt in 2010 and auto loans in 2011. It passed the \$1 trillion mark in 2012, and it is poised to continue its upward trajectory. A bill introduced by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., that would have allowed people with college loan debt to refinance with rates from the 2013-14 academic year was blocked last year.

"We're asking [the young people] to make a significant financial investment, and this age today is carrying a lot of loan debt with a college education, and realizing they've got to have a place to live and they might not be able to buy a home. And yet we're sitting here saying, well, how do we get this group interested in boating?" says Tom Slikkers, president of Tiara/Pursuit builder S2 Yachts. "There's a lot in front of that group before we get to boating." ⁿ

NEXT MONTH: The industry is not about to concede two generations of boat sales and is working hard to reverse the prevailing trend. We take a look at what industry leaders are doing to sell the adult boating experience and what government might do to ease the financial burdens on GenXers and millennials.

Industry leaders hope a taste of the boating experience will persuade more young people to take up the lifestyle and eventually become boat owners.



Boat now, buy later?

Industry explores alternatives to ownership for younger generations short on time and resources

In its efforts to attract millennials and Gen Xers to the boating lifestyle, the industry is initiating innovative boat-sharing and rental ventures and undertaking a major research project to determine how these younger generations differ from their boat-buying baby-boomer forebears.

At the same time at least one industry leader says the government could be taking steps to improve the financial well-being of those younger generations and the middle class in general.

"I think the millennials still have plenty of opportunity," says National Marine Manufacturers Association president Thom Dammrich. "If we can really get this economy growing, there will be plenty of opportunity for them and they'll be a good market for our industry in the future. But one has to wonder whether our politicians are capable of doing what needs to be done to return our country to robust growth. To me, the answers are not all that hard."

Specifically, Dammrich has said student debt interest

should be forgiven for a period of time, such as 10 years, to let all of the payments go toward working down the principal. Or graduates should be able to refinance the loans at lower interest rates. "A lot of people are talking about that — Durbin, Warren, Sanders — how hard is it, really, just to do it? But Congress doesn't do it," he says.

"The infrastructure of this country is crumbling — the roads, the bridges, dams, parks. The deferred maintenance backlog is massive. Yet Congress and the administration can't seem to deal with it," Dammrich continues. "The middle class has been kind of stagnant for the last decade. Tax reform, building infrastructure to create good jobs, student loan debt — the solutions are obvious. But the solution isn't building a wall and creating

trade wars. The solution isn't negative things. The solution is positive things."

Big aspirations, few resources

Although many young people interviewed by Trade Only say they are not considering buying a boat, most still are finding ways to boat or aspiring to get on the water. "My father passed away in 2005; the boat is long since gone," says Jackie Gonzales, 45, of Kingston, N.Y. "My husband and I can't afford a boat, but it's something I would love to introduce my children to. Some of my greatest childhood memories revolve around boating and I welcome any and all opportunities to get out there again. There's a freedom to boating."

"Though I've not had the time or cash to invest in a boat, we now have some very best friends in the south shore of Long Island who take us out on their boats often to cruise around and go fishing," says Samantha Larkin, 40, of Long Island, N.Y. "If I had little or no access to a boat I would not be even entertaining the idea of owning. Although because I make it accessible to myself, I don't know if I can even answer that."

Jonathan King, 28, a York, Maine, photographer and musician, says he took his father's boat out last summer more than his father did. Neysa McNamara, a 38-year-old Natick, Mass., teacher, says her family still enjoys time on her parents' boat in Maine, as well as on her father-in-law's boat, which he keeps at a summer cabin on a lake in Connecticut.

Sarah Patrick, a 34-year resident of Sister Bay, Wis., boats when friends, who are retired, take theirs out. "I'm so happy I was able to grow up that way as a kid," she says, talking about her boating childhood in Southern California. "When my dad owned his boat, he owned it with a buddy of his." She says that kind of arrangement appeals to her. "I'd definitely go in with a buddy, and we'd take half the responsibility."

doesn't necessarily mean cheap, he says. The research will be conducted through the summer and presented later in the year.

The group also is working on a section of the Discover Boating website called Go Boating Today. "There's a theory out there that people may need to have more experiences as adults with boats because maybe they didn't have enough as kids," he says. The site would lead to various boat rental places in a geographic region.

Boating without the boat

This might be where companies such as Freedom Boat Club and Boatsetter come into play. Freedom Boat Club has seen solid growth in the past two years — from about 80 clubs to more than 100, says CEO John Giglio.

help newcomers stay in boating once they enter it because they have done the hands-on training and have had the experience they need to feel confident.

"It's that person who loved the idea of boating but was uneducated and didn't know everything that was involved in it," he says. "Or the person that never had training and was not comfortable, or made foolish mistakes, and they got scared, or it cost them money. Or they didn't flush the engines. Those are the types of things that lead new people to get out of boating, and these are mistakes I think the industry could do a much better job in educating the consumer about."

Freedom has an extensive training program so people who are new to boating can learn through classroom training, online training and on-the-water training with a captain for as long as they want to until they are comfortable.

Experiences, not things

Giglio and Boatsetter CEO Jaclyn Baumgarten both say that's why their companies exist — they do not compete with people who are potential boat owners; rather, they offer avenues for those who simply can't or do not want to purchase a boat.

"We have fought really hard over the last several years to get that message across to the industry that we are not competition," Giglio says. "They have embraced it, but it took a long time for them to look at us as collaborative instead of competitively. I think for the future of the industry, it makes a lot of sense."

Though the age demographic varies at clubs around the country, some markets, such as Austin, Texas, and Boston, are trending in the late 30s to early 40s. Compare that to the age of boat buyers and owners, and the difference is huge.

"Time is really our biggest competition — finding time to use what they're involved in. We give a little more back to them," Giglio says. "Again, they may be joining a club with aspirations to buy a boat, and many members do go buy a boat. They're not a candidate right this minute to go purchase a boat."

Giglio is trying to get some boatbuilders to partner with him at the dealer level, so if they have a customer they can't get financed or sold, maybe they will refer the

person to Freedom. Then, when the customer has had a few years at the club and wants to buy his own boat, maybe Freedom could offer him an incentive to return to that dealership that made the referral.

This could be more lucrative than boat dealers have realized. Giglio and his franchises will purchase about 500 boats in 2016, on the low end, and 700 on the high end.

"We had 1,000 boats in the fleet last year, and we will have somewhere between 1,300 and 1,500 this year. Some of those older ones will be sold as used models and replaced. We had 150,000 boat outings in 2015. The average is about 8 gallons of fuel in an outing," he says, adding he sold about 75 boats in 2015 and will sell about 125 in 2016. "We are involved in many facets of the industry, not just the boat club side."

Collaborative consumption

To date, Boatsetter has been largely focused on the Florida market, says Baumgarten, to ramp up inventory and interest cohesively. It will make a large push in New York and New England this spring and summer.

The company aggressively markets to younger demographics, and it has a large database of Coast Guard captains, which usually cost between \$40 and \$60 an hour. That works for owners who don't want to vet potential



Boatsetter is one of the companies giving young people a taste of boating without the commitment to ownership.

"Maybe because I'm still able to get out on them, I don't feel the pressure to buy them," says Patrick. "Maybe later in life, when I don't have to work as much, I might think about owning one."

Patrick says she would be interested in renting. "I'd like to be able to rent the boat for one flat price and not have to buy the slip, and do it worry-free."

"I think in some cases that's what our industry will be shaped by," says Tom Slikkers, president and CEO of S2 Yachts, the parent company of Tiara and Pursuit. "It's not going to be unilateral across the board, or one solution that's going to fit everything. But I think we're going to see an increasing amount of people who want that boating experience, but they're not going to want ownership of the product that goes with it. They're going to pay for the experience, which they understand up front, and I think they're willing to pay a premium — but it's going to be way less in the big picture than it takes to own the same product."

So maybe the industry is too caught up in boat ownership, says Jack Ellis, founder of Miami-based Info-Link, which analyzes data gleaned from boat registrations. He includes himself in that category. "We only measure registrations, which means these are owned boats," he says. "We don't look at all at the rest of the industry."

It's for this reason that Discover Boating is launching a large research study to help understand the next generations of boaters, says Discover Boating president Carl Blackwell. "We have no results because we haven't started yet, but we are embarking on this research to understand what's different about these coming generations, how they buy today and what path they take to ownership," Blackwell says. "So we can understand the difference between what happened before the recession versus after the recession, and how people think differently."

Blackwell senses that, post-recession, people are looking for different experiences and value, though that

"There's a certain level of apprehension around boat ownership for some people," Giglio says. "For some who have been in it, they might be reluctant to get back in because they do know the pitfalls."

The club concept also appeals to people who lack the time to maintain a boat. "I see the appeal of boat clubs because the boat's not your problem," says Ellis. "When the engine needs maintenance or something goes awry, they fix it. You don't have to store it; you don't have to insure it. The amount of time I spend working on my boats is easily more than I spend using them."

And if what we read about Gen X and millennials is true, they do not want to spend time maintaining and fixing boats. They want to use them for the experience, as Ben Dorton, president of Heyday Inboards and at 25 a millennial himself, often has said.

Heydays are marketed specifically to millennials and are among a number of brands with entry-level price points. Robalo, Bayliner, Chaparral and Parker are among others trying to tap that market.

"The industry never wants to admit this, and I guess if you're handy you can get around some of it, but my engines, I try to do my maintenance every 100 hours, which is every six to eight months," Ellis says. It's just routine stuff, he notes. "Nothing's broken, but it winds up [being costly]. Boating is expensive. We just need to communicate it's worth it. And do we lose some people ... when they realize that, holy crap, it's not just \$229 a month?"

Giglio says experience with Freedom Boat Club can



Jack Ellis



John Giglio

renters and who will instead just choose to select four or five captains to take renters out. That also works for less experienced boaters or those who want to enjoy their time without running the boat, she says.

"We did a survey of 5,000 boat owners and asked how they would use the platform," says Baumgarten. Of those, 23 percent said they would rent their boat, "but what blew us away was 86 percent said they as boat owners would use the platform to rent. That was either because they travel or they wanted to try a boat designed for a different use, or due to an aspirational desire to try a boat that's nicer than what they can afford.

"Younger people are having a harder time economically than our parents did, so buying a boat is not really an option for most of us," Baumgarten says. "I've boated more in the last year than I have in the last 15 years because of Boatsetter. I'm getting to experience boats that I could never, never have afforded."

The model hasn't caught on just yet because the awareness isn't there, she says. But she believes it could be a selling point for dealers. "They can tell customers, if you buy it and put it into a platform like Boatsetter, you can help cover finance, maintenance, slip fees," she says. "That's a compelling tool to help people."

If not on the water, near it

Reaching new age groups is one of the reasons West Marine has undergone a complete business strategy overhaul in the past couple of years, says CEO Matt Hyde. Those changes have led to a 12 percent increase in new customer counts in the last two years, which he says is "a bit of a standout" in retail.

"I think a lot of retailers ... confuse their average customer with their target customer, and you have to be clear about both of those strategies as a retailer," Hyde says. When they confuse the two, retailers can perpetuate stagnancy among demographics.

So West Marine is making the transition from being a parts store to being a boating store. That doesn't mean the parts won't be there — they continue to be the bread and butter for West Marine. "But what I didn't see when I stepped into West Marine three years ago is an on-ramp to people who have no idea they want to boat, to participate in water recreation in a way that fits their lifestyle," Hyde says. "We need to not try to get people off the couch and buying a boat. We need to get them off the couch to recreate on and around the water. That's what's going to serve the industry and the future.

"A boat is a huge commitment," Hyde continues. "Even for those of us who have a boat sitting in a slip and it's pretty close to our homes, we don't get to use a boat all the time. When you really take a look at how many days you use a boat and the complexity of it, you really realize it's a commitment and a lifestyle. So we're trying to tap into that commitment and lifestyle and passion."

To that end the company has overhauled 63 stores it's calling Water Life stores, and West Marine plans to work on 12 more in 2016. "Those stores are really redefining what a marine chandlery is, if you will," he says. "It's designed to be a retailer that speaks to that customer's life on the water, and a sense of experience and excitement when you walk into the store matters to the customer a lot, specifically those target customers. It is a finesse, and it's not without risk. We have to do everything."

The boating lifestyle

West Marine has brought in a lot of new products — stand-up paddleboards, for example. It is growing the e-commerce portion of its business by changing the way the brand presents itself. "We're changing who is in our imagery, which makes a lot of difference," he says. "We have African American women gracing the covers of our catalogs and are bringing our associates into our ads. This is a great example of a piece of trying to position ourselves to be welcoming, accessible and celebrate people who recreate on and around the water in the way that they want to recreate."

The company is making more experiential pushes through events such as its new West Marine electronics expos and Carolina Cup series because "that's important to millennials, that whole experience piece, as well," Hyde says.

"There are not enough people getting off the couch and buying a boat," Hyde adds. "So what are the multiple ways we can help people get a connection with recreating on and around water that are achievable and approachable and accessible to a broad set of customers? I think those models are very important pieces of the puzzle that are only going to help all of us."

Hyde hopes that will help tease those, such as Patrick, who are already sold on the idea of recreating on the water, but are not potential boat buyers today.

"If you're willing to deal with all that comes with it, it's 100 percent worth it to have a boat," Patrick says. "I could not live without at least having access to boats, having grown up on one. It does something for the mind and body and soul." n

Business Is Booming at Freedom Boat Club!

Now reaching more than 100 clubs in the U.S. and Canada and doubling its size since 2012, Freedom Boat Club is enjoying a major surge in growth. The strength of the organization lies in both its corporate leadership and solid franchise strength, both of which have benefited from the launch of a 20 Group in 2015.

According to 20 Group facilitator David Parker of Parker Business Planning, the Freedom Boat Club is going places.

"This is an awesome company to work with both in terms of being on the leading edge of technology and by offering a service that is growing in demand in the consumer boating marketplace," said Parker. "Freedom Boat Club is a great complement to a retail boat dealership or marina."

Parker cites Freedom Boat Club's reservation system, proprietary lead management program and boat check-in-check-out processes, as well as its national fleet of clean, late-model boats and well established brands, as major contributors to its success.

"I've also been very impressed by the level of professionalism among the sales team and the attentiveness of the dockmasters as being top notch," he added.

Added John Giglio, Freedom Boat Club President and CEO, "The sharing of best practices and review of facilities and financials has been of great benefit to our organization. We believe the 20 Group has strengthened our organization tremendously and we look forward to continued growth and improvement in the years ahead."



David Parker
Parker Business Planning



Freedom Boat Club has 10,000 members nationwide with 100+ franchise locations in 21 states and Canada. For information on franchise market availability, visit:

freedomboatclubfranchise.com

Freedom Boat Club 20 Group
(not all members pictured)