



## **The ExpertVoice Consumer Database and Concerns of Permanent Brand Impacts**

ExpertVoice is a rapidly growing consumer database based on converting full-price, omni-channel consumers to single-channel deep discount buyers.

Providing their users with year-round discounts up to 60%,<sup>1</sup> the ExpertVoice consumer-conversion sales model erodes the ability of a brand to sell at full price in other channels, including direct-to-consumer, big box specialty, and independent specialty outdoor.

In our opinion, this creation of off-price loyalists at the expense of brand equity cements a change in consumer buying behavior that is immediate and irrevocable.

Grassroots Outdoor Alliance is encouraging all its member retailers and vendor partners to increase their awareness and understanding of ExpertVoice, to consider this consumer database's impact on current and future brand sales, and to take action in defense of their own businesses as necessary.

During a recent review of Expert Voice's website and news pages, we identified two noteworthy aspects that we feel are of significant concern to the long-term viability of brands in our marketplace.

### **1. ExpertVoice is expanding their 'pro' database through the addition of national consumer membership organizations**

ExpertVoice entered the Outdoor market as a 'pro sales' alternative, and initially grew by gaining access to retailer and brand employee databases, as well as member lists of select professional organizations, such as ski patrollers. This is common behavior among 'pro sales' solutions.

However, current ExpertVoice growth is dominated by the addition of general association databases (examples: medical professionals, healthcare workers, firefighters, police, active military<sup>2</sup>) as well as paid membership organizations with minimal or no 'pro' qualification requirements (examples: The Mountaineers<sup>3</sup>, Ducks Unlimited<sup>4</sup>, IMBA<sup>5</sup>, American Alpine Club<sup>6</sup>, Colorado Mountain Club<sup>7</sup>, Teton Gravity Research<sup>8</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.expertvoice.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.expertvoice.com/2020-in-review-site-trends-and-news-brands/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mountaineers.org/membership/benefits>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.expertvoice.com/october-2020-recap-site-trends-and-new-brands/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.expertvoice.com/partners/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://americanalpineclub.org/gear-discounts>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cmc.org/Join/MemberBenefits.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tetongravity.com/search/f7daa25193ad1ed47a6ead84e8345afa>



In 2020, ExpertVoice reported that their channel grew to more than 1 million consumers, with the addition of 217,177 consumers in the last year including 9,000 healthcare workers<sup>9</sup>. ExpertVoice also reports that their network now includes more than 4,500 organizations<sup>10</sup>.

## **2. ExpertVoice employee counts indicate conversion from consumer to pro is permanent**

Based on ExpertVoice membership statistics listed on their website, the ExpertVoice database includes a significant number of “phantom” employees -- our term for consumers who have gained permanent brand discount status through an ExpertVoice approved company or organization, yet do not exist on that group’s actual member list.

Phantom employees on ExpertVoice are extremely common among participating retailers. As listed in the chart below, among 86 Grassroots Outdoor Alliance member retailers who are registered on ExpertVoice, there are 2,700 reported employees in our database -- but ExpertVoice listed a total of 8,162 employees at those retailers as of May 20, 2021. As an example, one Grassroots retailer with 4 employees has 217 listed as members of ExpertVoice.

In the same chart below, Big Box retail employees are also overrepresented. Dick’s Sporting Goods openly reports 50,100 employees, yet has 130,449 members registered on ExpertVoice. MEC has 2,450 employees, and 6,788 members listed on ExpertVoice. Sportsman’s Warehouse has 5,100 employees, and 6,580 members listed on ExpertVoice.

### **Conclusion**

After extensive review and discussion, it is the opinion of Grassroots Outdoor Alliance that vendors cannot coexist on ExpertVoice and in Specialty Retail as our business models are incompatible. For the long-term success of our businesses and our industry, Specialty Retailers must build partnerships with vendors who are equally committed to a level playing field in an omni-channel marketplace.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.expertvoice.com/2020-in-review-site-trends-and-news-brands/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.expertvoice.com/2020-in-review-site-trends-and-news-brands/>



	Employee members of ExpertVoice, as listed on ExpertVoice website <sup>11</sup>	Current reported employees
<b>86 Grassroots Retailers</b>	8,162	2,700 <sup>12</sup>
<b>Dicks Sporting Goods</b>	130,449	50,100 <sup>13</sup>
<b>MEC</b>	6,788	2,450 <sup>14</sup>
<b>REI</b>	12,566	15,000 <sup>15</sup>
<b>Sportsmans Warehouse</b>	11,680	7,000 <sup>16</sup>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>169,645</b>	<b>77,250</b>

<b>Number of Brands Partnered with EV</b>	<b>500+<sup>17</sup></b>
<b>Number of Associations EV provides discounts to members</b>	<b>4,500<sup>18</sup></b>
<b>Number of Consumers in EV's Database</b>	<b>932,000<sup>19</sup> and growing</b>

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.expertvoice.com/user/affiliation-help>

<sup>12</sup> Source: Grassroots Outdoor Alliance

<sup>13</sup> <https://eresearch.fidelity.com/eresearch/goto/evaluate/snapshot.jhtml?symbols=DKS>

<sup>14</sup>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountain\\_Equipment\\_Co-op#:~:text=In%202017%2C%20it%20was%20reported,retail%20stores%20and%20%2C450%20employees.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountain_Equipment_Co-op#:~:text=In%202017%2C%20it%20was%20reported,retail%20stores%20and%20%2C450%20employees.)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.rei.com/about-rei>

<sup>16</sup> <https://eresearch.fidelity.com/eresearch/goto/evaluate/snapshot.jhtml?symbols=SPWH>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.expertvoice.com/partners/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.expertvoice.com/partners/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.expertvoice.com/promotionalmedia/>