

## **Why Aren't We More Motivated? We Are The Solution To The Gun Violence Crisis.**

By Lauren Hobart

Since 2014, the number of youth who died by firearm increased by 68%, surpassing motor vehicle deaths in 2020.

With a number of new safety precautions that have been put in place to help decrease motor vehicle deaths, why haven't more precautions been put in place to help end youth gun violence deaths?

It's because these precautions start with us.

On February 14th, 2018, former CEO Ed Stack was fed up after hearing of the 17 students who died in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida.

After hearing the students' outcry, Ed made the decision to say enough is enough and believed it was time for the company as a whole to take a stand.

Two weeks later, Dick's Sporting Goods stopped selling guns to customers younger than 21 and removed assault rifles and high-capacity magazines from all stores.

In April of the same year, Dick's destroyed \$5 million worth of guns and other gun related inventory to turn into scrap metal.

This is a large reason why I chose to accept the position as CEO of Dick's Sporting Goods. To follow in Ed and Richard Stack's footsteps while continuing to speak out against issues prevalent in our world and ultimately stand up for the protection and safety of future generations.

I am done with hearing the echoing silence from companies who claim to care about these issues. Where is your outcry? Where are your contributions that are helping make our world a safer place?

We have an obligation as industry leaders to use our voice to make positive progress in our society, ultimately protecting and providing opportunities to keep kids healthy and safe.

### **What Dicks Is Doing To Keep This Promise**

#### **Being A Vocal Advocate For Gun Control**

Speaking out is the first step but an essential one. Dick's will continue to be vocal advocates for gun control.

Children are our future, and we need to protect our future.

#### **No Gun-Related Inventory Allowed In Our Stores**

Despite the backlash and criticism we faced from consumers in 2012, we will continue to keep our promise to never hold guns or any gun-related inventory in our stores. And that's a promise.

#### **Donating To Keep Youth Sports Alive**

Accessibility for kids to take part in sports programs not only improves mental health, but also promotes a "college-ready" mindset allowing student athletes the opportunity to get higher grades and stay away from deterring activities, like drugs. Kids should be worried about their future, not their safety. Our Sports Matter Community Grant Program has raised 8.9M+ in grant dollars to support local youth sports and public school athletic programs, allowing kids to be kids and us the opportunity to make the world a safer place for them to achieve their dreams.

## **What Our Industry Needs To Do**

### **Eliminate Selling Gun-Related Products**

With more regulations on the selling of gun-related products, we can start to take a step in the right direction in order to keep kids safe.

### **Fund Gun Violence Research**

Although there is research being done surrounding gun violence, we need to continue to fund research that will help us better understand how we can be better advocates for safety within the United States.

### **Take A Stand and Stick By Your Morals**

Standing on the sidelines and not taking a stance on an issue is no longer an option. You must take a stance that aligns with your company's values and make a promise to the public about what you will do going forward to help solve the issue of gun violence in our country. By becoming an outspoken advocate for change, you have the power to inspire other leaders to start making progress towards real, value-aligned change.

I challenge all industry leaders to look at their company's morals and values and make today the day that they take a stand to help put an end to gun violence in our country.

As the title of Ed Stack's memoir says, "Build a Business. Take a Stand. Make a Difference".

It's time we all take a page out of Ed's book: stop making excuses and start to DO better before it's too late, because actions truly do speak louder than words.

## **Strategy Note**

The rationale behind this thought-leadership piece is to publicly say “the thing” no one else in the industry is saying, in this case, bringing attention to the gun violence issue in the United States. Dick’s has a previous history of being outspoken against gun violence and they followed up their words with actions: removing all guns and gun-related inventory from their stores. Even though this happened almost 15 years ago under a different leadership group, this piece is intended to demonstrate two things:

- 1.) Lauren Hobart is a CEO who not only understands the moral integrity and values that Dick’s stands for, she herself believes in this cause and is willing to continue this fight, providing an inside look into her morals while building a more authentic relationship with the public.
- 2.) Serve as a call-to-action to other industry leaders to no longer stay quiet and instead demonstrate that they can take a position on an issue that affects the health of future generations.

This piece is meant to light a fire underneath other companies who may want to speak out against an issue but are too afraid to. This piece (and Lauren) will serve as a reminder to companies who want to continue to build trust with audiences by demonstrating (once again with their actions) that taking an authentic social stance rooted in the company's morals and values is the way to start making a change, while continuing to gain support from younger generations and stay socially relevant as “one of the companies who actually cares”.