



➔ Scott Greenberg has a very hands-on role at Merrick.

Hands On

Merrick Tackle has emphasised personal service and unusual offerings for 50 years.

Visit Merrick Tackle, the New York wholesaler known for its custom-fishing-rod business, and you may find Scott Greenberg, the owner, packing an order.

He may be teaching a new rod-wrapping technique to one of his nine employees; he could be taking an order.

"I'm a hands-on kind of guy," says Scott, who's been working for the company for about 43 years. He is 51-years-old.

Roy Greenberg, Scott's father, opened a retail fishing-tackle store in Merrick, Long Island, in 1959.

"My father was an accountant and he hated his job," Scott explains. "One day, my mother asked him: 'So what do you want to do?'"

"Well, I love fishing and hunting and boating," he said. So he opened a retail store.

From the start, Merrick Tackle stocked hard-to-find tackle that set the business apart. As the store's reputation grew, so did its retail customer base.

Joyce Greenberg, Roy's wife and Scott's mother, joined the business. The Greenbergs launched a mail-order catalogue. Soon, other storeowners, unable

to find some of unusual gear that Merrick carried, were ordering from the Greenbergs' catalogue. The wholesale side of the business was born.

Merrick's inventory and sales volume outgrew the original store, and the company moved to a larger building. Merrick Tackle became one of the largest retailers on Long Island – New York's magnet for saltwater fishermen in the Northeast.

Scott assumed more responsibility in Merrick's day-to-day business, and by the time he was 18 in the mid-1970s, he was running the operation.

Roy eventually retired and Scott decided to make the business 100 per cent wholesale.

In the early 1990s he moved Merrick Tackle to New York's Catskill Mountains and opened a warehouse on the banks of the Esopus, a legendary American trout stream.

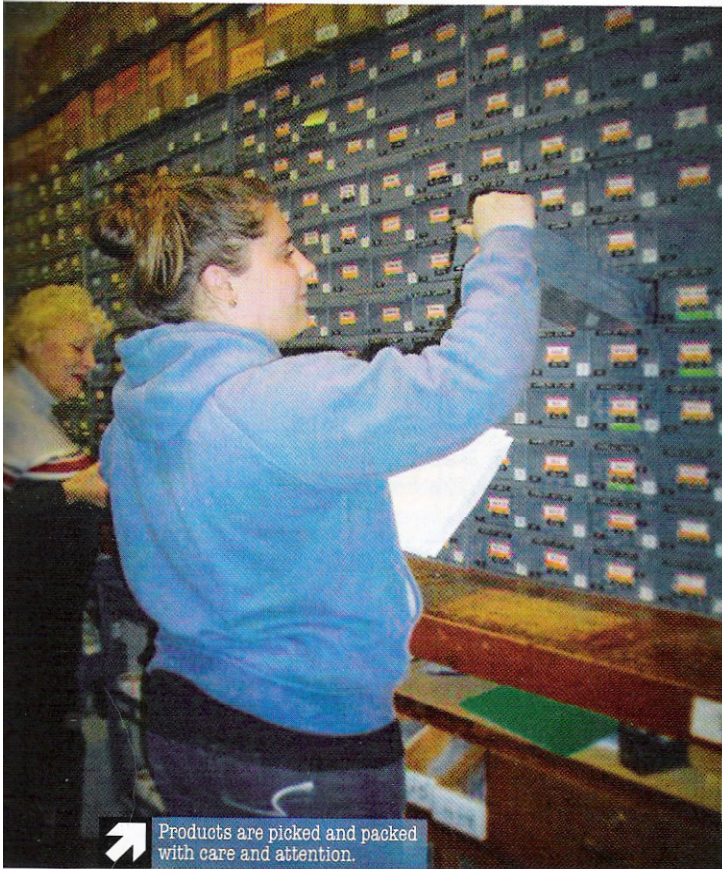
Today, Scott says that Merrick Tackle serves retailers in all the American states and 58 countries.

"We're known for rod-building components," he adds, "but we stock over 30,000 SKUs, and we special-order others."

Scott's website, www.merricktackle.com, lists scores of international manufacturers, including Okuma, Tica, Cortland and others.

Among the big names is Bronco. "That's a brand we developed for our retailers, so they can compete with the big-box stores," Scott says. "We cater to mom-and-pop stores. I ran a retail outlet, so I know what they need – and it's not 10 per cent.

"If my customers are making money, I'm making money."



➔ Products are picked and packed with care and attention.



➔ Merrick has a real personal touch with every aspect of its business.

Scott sticks to Merrick's founding philosophy of stocking unusual gear. "We don't carry every lure that's out there because today's hot item is tomorrow's closeout," he explains. "On the other hand, we carry everything our customers need. You can't sell out of an empty cart."

Merrick stocks an extensive variety of fly-tying and lure-making components, as well as rod-building supplies, so retailers can build unique tackle with higher-than-average mark-ups. "The guy who buys a custom rod is not the same guy who buys a factory rod," Scott says. "The custom-rod customer is willing to pay a little more for something special."

"Stores that offer rod-building classes have found a way to generate sales during the off-season. Customers who buy components to build their own rods are like fly tiers: they always seeking new materials and components to improve performance."

Merrick offers workshops for

custom builders who want to learn the latest techniques.

Everyone who works for Merrick Tackle has learnt to build custom rods. "They build rods for themselves and their friends," Scott says. "I want them to know what they're talking about when they're working with customers who are rod builders."

For several years, Scott, like many other American

"Now, customers can call for an appointment and come when it's convenient for them. We buy them lunch, and they have 10 people catering to them. We're in the Catskills where there's great skiing, trout fishing and other activities, so some of our customers come for the weekend and make a vacation out of it."

Personal service is the hallmark of Merrick Tackle.

"When we're packing an order, for instance, it has to be a nice job – neatness counts."

Joyce Greenberg, Scott's mother, still works in the office.

Merrick Tackle is grounded in tradition, but it's a dynamic business. "My goal is to keep expanding at a rate that we can continue to serve our customers."

"My philosophy has always been to try to be different. If

“ Merrick stocks an extensive variety of fly-tying, lure-making and rod-building components so retailers can build unique tackle with high margins. ”

wholesalers, would open his warehouse for weekend dealer-shows during winter, but no longer.

"We still have a show, but it's year round. When we had the weekend show, it was always at the wrong time for some dealers," he recalls. "The other problem was that we'd have a tremendous turnout and only 10 people to look after everyone.

Scott explains: "We treat everyone the way we would want to be treated. When you call us, you'll speak to a real person who understands what you need. You may speak to me. I'm here all the time and I do a lot of different things. I enjoy talking with customers about business and fishing."

"Personal service runs through the entire business," he says.

something isn't working, change it. If something is working, improve it." ITW



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