

COMPLETE **RV** RETAILER

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ON THE COVER:

(L to R) Jim and Louise Snow with their son Mike Snow of Lake View RV Centre.

A large black and white photograph of two men standing in front of a motorhome. The man on the left is wearing a dark jacket and jeans, and the man on the right is wearing a dark jacket over a blue polo shirt and jeans. The motorhome has "MONARCH Signature" and "XANTREX RV" branding. The background shows a blurred outdoor setting.

Canadian-based Xantrex sets its sights on having a better-educated base of customers, retailers and distributors

BY CRVR STAFF

(L to R) John McMillan, Schneider Electric director of sales and Richard Gaudet, vice president of Schneider Electric have developed a new process for handling Xantrex-product warranty issues to make it easier on parts managers.

SELLING & TELLING

As its presence in the RV industry grew, Vancouver, Canada-based Xantrex, a division of Schneider Electric, found a need to help educate its customers and business partners.

After all, power inverters and battery chargers might not quite be rocket science, but they might as well be, to some people.

"Our products are typically the kind that nobody talks about unless they need to

replace one," says John McMillan, director of sales for Xantrex-branded products.

But without those products providing mobile power sources, RVers wouldn't be able to have the devices that make their vehicles homes away from home. No toasters. No air conditioners. No flat-screen TVs.

So, with an eye toward getting Xantrex products into both RVs and boats, the company has begun an effort to get its sup-

pliers and dealers as involved in learning about the products as they are in moving the products.

Call it Inverter 101, if you will.

The effort includes white papers written to explain the products and their uses, on-line videos by Tech Doctor Don Wilson and other technical experts, and interactive merchandising displays. The effort also features basic education.

MANUFACTURER PROFILE: **XANTREX**

"Most end-users are well-educated," McMillan says. "RVers and boaters were very early adopters of our products."

But that isn't necessarily the case with all retailers and suppliers.

"They carry a tremendous number of parts," he says, noting that it's hard to be an expert in every product category. "We need to help educate them because they don't always fully understand."

Education isn't necessarily limited to just the "how it works" end of power inverters. It also extends to helping customers understand what their power needs really are.

For example, high-tech devices need a much more pure form of alternating current called "true sine wave" in order to function at their top capability. True sine wave inverters are more expensive than modified sine wave inverters. But the end result can mean a much more pleasant experience for the customer and fewer complaints for the dealer.

LINK PRO BATTERY MONITOR

- Displays voltage, charge and discharge current, consumed amp-hours, remaining battery capacity & the time remaining of your battery bank

SYSTEM CONTROL PANEL (SCP)

- Displays all system configuration & diagnostic information in one control location
- Provides basic controls for other devices connected to the network

FREEDOM SW INVERTER/CHARGER

- Pure sine wave power just like the local electric grid
- 2 x surge for demanding loads (5 sec at 40°C)
- Full output at higher temperatures
- Works with most generators
- 12V & 24V models

AUXILIARY BATTERY CHARGER

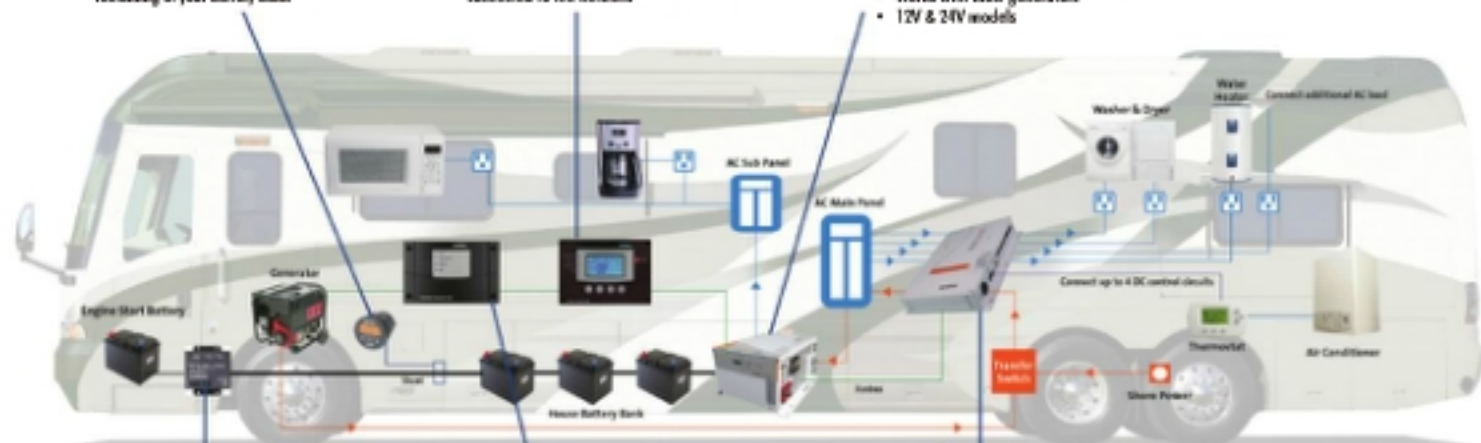
- Charges auxiliary or start batteries from an existing charging source such as a converter or inverter/charger
- Automatically adjusts for 12 or 24 volt battery banks

AUTOMATIC GENERATOR START (AGS)

- Automatically activates a generator to provide Freedom SW Inverter/Charger with power to recharge depleted batteries or assist with heavy loads
- Compatible with popular generator brands

FREEDOM SEQUENCE POWER MANAGER

- Automatically sheds & re-engages up to 8 prioritized loads (AC & DC)
- Works with the Freedom SW Inverter/Charger & other components such as the SCP & AGS to form an integrated, automated power management system



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my Xperience!
Based on Real Life Experiences!

Do you have a power problem?
Consult with a real life expert!

PROWATT SW
FREEDOM SW
TRUECHARGE 2

xantrex
Have questions about
On-board AC Power? Consult...
TECH DOCTOR
Don Wilson

THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO EQUIP DEALERS WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS SO THEY CAN CONFIDENTLY OFFER OUR POWER SOLUTIONS BASED ON CUSTOMER REQUIREMENTS AND APPLICATION.



Don Wilson, aka "The Tech Doctor" from Schneider Electric explains how merely replacing a malfunctioning power inverter with the same brand that was originally in the coach isn't always what is best for the RV consumer.

With that in mind, Xantrex also has developed a product selector guide that leads users through a series of categories to help them choose the right model of inverter based on the products they want to power.

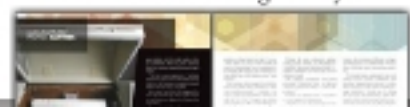
"I'm amazed at what people need and want power for," McMillan says. "The selector guide is important because people often undervalue the amount of power they require for certain applications."

HISTORY OF INNOVATION

The knowledge behind this education effort is backed by a company with a long history in the mobile power business.

Richard Gaudet, vice president of the Xantrex-branded business of Schneider Electric, says the company was renowned for innovation in the 1990s and looked to acquire companies to improve its offerings. During that period of growth, Xantrex acquired Statpower, Trace and Heart Interface.

"Heart Interface was well known for power conversion in the RV industry," Gaudet says. "They were the number one supplier in the category and were first on our list. We didn't want to enter the market and replace another company. We wanted to offer quality and value to the customers right away."



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McMillan (above) and Gaudet (left) were instrumental in developing Schneider Electric's effort to provide educational materials for both the industry and the consumer on its Xantrex-branded products.



Gaudet credited the addition of those three companies with enabling Xantrex to meet those goals and create "category-defining products" such as the Freedom series of inverters and inverter/chargers. Freedom had been a Heart brand and was "a mainstay in Class A motorhomes," according to Gaudet, and Xantrex continued and expanded upon the brand.

In 2008, Xantrex was bought by Schneider Electric of France.

According to Gaudet, Schneider traditionally had not participated in renewable or mobile energy, although the company has a strong presence worldwide and deep pockets. Schneider wanted to enter these industries with a strong market leader and Xantrex was exactly what it was looking for in an acquisition target. He says it has been a strong marriage ever since.

"We filled some gaps in their portfolio," he says. "We have a strong reputation in those fields and Schneider improved our testing practices and supply chain. The mobile power side of the Xantrex brand had a strong reputation, so they decided to continue that sector as Xantrex Technology."

"Schneider is a \$35 billion international company, they have allowed Xantrex to remain its own brand, so we are in it for the long run," McMillan says. "The Xantrex brand is a grassroots business who has not forgotten where we started from."

PARTNERS FOR EDUCATION

With history on Xantrex's side, the company has expanded its educational effort to the merchandising part of the business.

In partnership with Stag-Parkway, the company is launching new displays to educate retailer associates and provide information to end-users as well.

"Dealers can enhance their store appeal and increase sales by utilizing our new merchandising program," says Mital Chandrani, Xantrex marketing manager. "This innovative program will enable dealers to create and highlight a new category for AC power products. Customers in dealerships will be able to take with them the immensely popular educational piece – the Xantrex Selector Guide, which is part of the merchandising package. The ultimate goal is to

MANUFACTURER
PROFILE: **XANTREX**



equip dealers with the right tools so they can confidently offer our power solutions based on customer requirements and application."

"We have a vast repository of technical and how-to videos on our YouTube channel which we will continue to expand to benefit dealers and end-users," he added.

At its most basic level, the program features educational signs that can be located in retail stores to explain the Xantrex line of products.

A second level of display features a model of a Freedom SW inverter/charger.

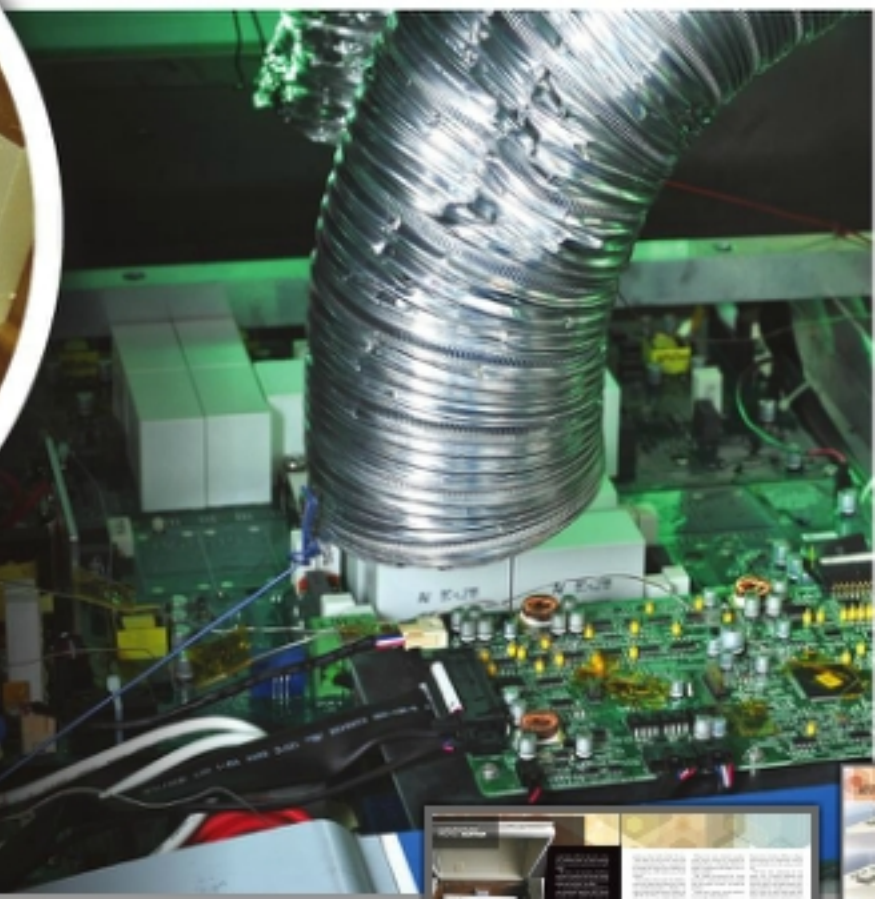
The highest level of display features an area to allow in-store demonstrations and has a wide-screen monitor that plays continuous installation and how-to videos.

McMillan says the partnership with Scag has had numerous benefits.

"The beauty of dealing with somebody like Scag is they are close to the market, provide outstanding service and they have



Schneider Electric rigorously tests its products to ensure they are engineered to withstand the conditions they will be used in. Various power loads, vibration, heat and saltwater tests depicted above and to the right are just a few of these tests.



product on hand, ready to ship," he says. "Their desire to meet dealers' needs and wants is tremendous. Stag is committed to developing the Xantrex line of products to their more than 2,600 dealers across North America."

The product selector guide has information on two sides and is printed on a thick, vinyl, durable material. It is offered at no cost to dealers by Stag-Parkway. Dealers can call: 800-765-7824 to request the product selector guide or other merchandising materials.

INNOVATION IN TESTING

With Xantrex well-established with mobile power platforms for RV, marine, commercial trucking and military uses, the company has some leeway for being tough on itself.

Perhaps the most exhaustive product testing system around was developed by Schneider Electric in Burnaby, British Columbia. Chandrani says the facility cost \$13 million to build.

The "Highly Accelerated Life Tested procedure" conducted there was devised with one purpose in mind – to break the products.

Gaudet says Xantrex tests its products at every stage of development.

"You have to test the prototypes at every stage if you want to understand where the failure points are and introduce design improvements," he says. "We basically deactivate the thermal and environmental protections to break the barriers of limits. We need to break the product."

The products are exposed to extreme heat, cold and vibration during testing.

Experts also introduce different voltages and frequencies in combination with the above to further stress the products under test.

"We break them, understand the weak points, even in extreme conditions, and introduce design improvements to make them less likely to fail under normal operating conditions," Gaudet says. By doing this we know the field failures right after launch will be relatively small and our customers do not feel that part of our product improvement cycle. It is all done during product development, thus our customers can count on our products to be highly reliable right out of the gate."

Gaudet says the fact that Xantrex products have such a wide variety of applications means that designers making inverters intended for RVs, for example, can

APProducts

Your Dealership's Sales Staff did a good job at acquiring a new customer's business on a Coach sale...

How that customer is treated by your Service Department over the next few years will greatly affect where they go when trading in for their next Coach.

One of our goals at AP Products is to make sure your Dealership has access to the **RIGHT** service parts **WHEN** you need them.

Slide Out Motors & Gears



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Entrance and Baggage Locks

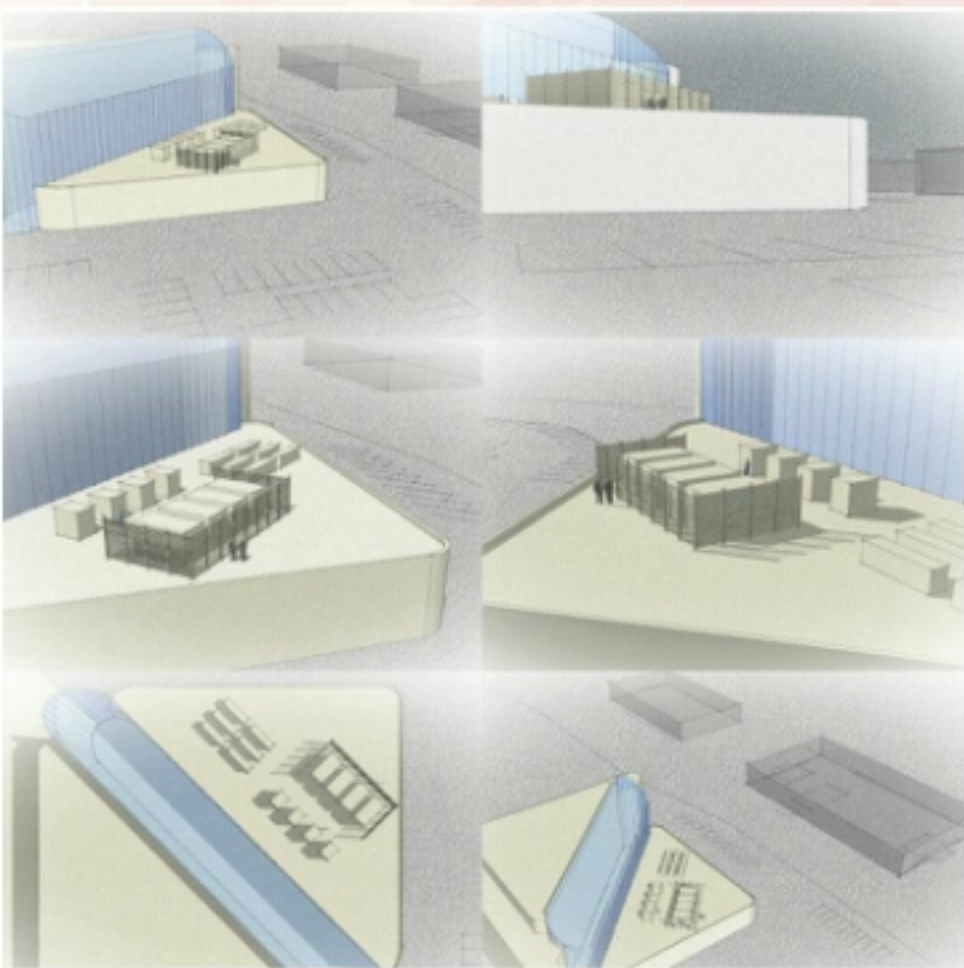


Aluminum Extrusions



"Our success is measured by your success"

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learn from what is going on in the military, and vice versa.

With military vehicles and long-haul trucks, vibration is a major factor in how the products function. In the marine market, salt water is a major factor. Taking design aspects from products in the different markets helps Xantrex be cost-effective across platforms and bring innovation without burdening the cost of making and selling the products, Gaudet says.

"The Freedom products also are used in marine, RV, heavy-duty truck and work service vehicles and military applications," he says.

NEW DIRECTION FOR WARRANTIES

"We know we're not perfect," Gaudet says. "Sometimes things happen in the field. Sometimes things fail."

So, Gaudet says, Xantrex is hoping to follow a new policy in 2014 that ensures that customers are back up and running very quickly, without a financial burden, if a device failure is truly the result of a warranty-covered incident.



Schneider Electric is building a new \$13 million inverter testing lab at its headquarters in Burnaby B.C. The lab will be completed in May of 2014.

"We're doing a field service strategy to swap out a defective part in the field with a new product," he says. "If it's a warranty incident, dealers give us the details and we send a new unit right away, no questions asked. That way the customer doesn't experience the pain of not having their unit in service. If a dealer can get a customer back on the road the same day they arrive, why shouldn't they? Xantrex is hoping this new policy will enable that."

Xantrex will still do some spot inspections on the failed parts to learn why they failed, so they can continue to understand how the products are performing in the field with an aim for continuous product design improvement and also to make sure the incidents should be covered by warranty.

SHORT LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Whether it be supply, education or warranty, Xantrex is trying to shorten the distance between the company and its customers and distributors.

"We want to trigger that single point of contact," McMillan says. "We want the dealer to be able to pick up the phone and make one call and get the answers they are looking for."

McMillan says the company has created a dealer hotline, which allows a dealer to call with questions without having to wait in a long line before getting to speak to a real person.

"We are extremely proud to be a Canadian company and we have a large number of Canadian employees," Gaudet says. "We

also needed to be closer to the aftermarket and end-user customers. In 2014, we're focusing on that area, have added four regional salespeople and a sales application engineer. That puts us closer to our channel customers and our end customers."

McMillan says this effort dates back to Xantrex's earliest days.

"We want to impress on the market that Xantrex is a legacy brand," he says. "We've been around a long, long time. When we had Statpower and Trace and Heart, and we rolled them into one in Xantrex, the lifeline of those companies and products still exists."

"We're bringing that intimacy back into our business. We want our customer experience to be seamless, flawless and enjoyable."



xantrex™

Allan Warner, RV Owner - "I went to a RV parts dealer and asked them what brands they carry. I asked him about his opinion which one lasts the longest, and built the best. And it was no question, he didn't hesitate - XANTREX"



Smart choice for power™



Kevin Robichon, RV Technician - "Xantrex products are fantastic. The way they are designed and the way they're built to work in the RV industry is one of the best things you could put in your unit. I would definitely recommend Xantrex products to any of my customers"



INVERTERS



INVERTER/CHARGERS



ENERGY MGMT. SYSTEMS



ACCESSORIES

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**NEW FEATURES**

PARALLEL SOURCING FOR

2X

OUTPUT POWER

SERIES STACKING FOR

120/240
Vac

APPLICATIONS

24-VOLT INVERTER/ CHARGER

"Dealers can enhance store appeal and increase sales by utilizing our new merchandising program. The merchandising program includes an educational piece - the Xantrex Selector Guide. The entire program equips dealers with the right tools to offer power solutions based on each customer's requirements and application."

— **NITUL CHANDRANI**, MARKETING MANAGER FOR SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC



Schneider Electric, based in Burnaby, B.C., produces the 24-volt Freedom SW inverter/ charger, designed for both OEM and aftermarket applications. The inverter/charger is equipped with advanced features to meet the requirements of larger 24-volt power systems in RVs and boats. When operating at full output, in a wide temperature range, the Freedom SW features a high-surge rating complemented by temperature-compensated multi-stage charging. The Freedom SW is available in two models - 2,000 watt/ 50 amp and 3,000 watt/ 75 amp. Both feature a generator support mode, and meet UL145B, CSA and FCC Class B requirements.

WWW.XANTREX.COM

Stag-Parkway Part Number: 48-0620

Manufacturer's Part Number: 81-2022-12

NEW!**TIRE PRESSURE MONITORING SYSTEM**

"The key to merchandising TPMS is **SAFETY**. After all, who doesn't want to be safe while driving their motorhome or pulling their trailer. With the many expandable features, there isn't an application that TST cannot fit. For those towing a vehicle, remind them that their OEM system on their vehicle will not alert them if tire pressure goes low. By adding their towed vehicle to the TST system they can monitor ALL their tires from one location."

— **BILL SMITH**, STAG-PARKWAY PRODUCT DIRECTOR



Truck System Technologies, in Cumming, Georgia, offers the 507 Flow-Through TPMS. The kit includes everything needed for installation. The flat screen monitor features auto-coding and a built-in rechargeable lithium-ion battery for up to 36 hours of wireless operation. The standard kit has six tire sensors, but is easily expandable up to 22 tires. Users can add or remove air and check tire pressure without removing the tire sensors. Water-resistant and powered by user-replaceable CR1632 batteries, the sensors detect pressure and temperature readings every six seconds. Chargers and mounting options are included.

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Stag-Parkway Part Number: 92-0407

Manufacturer's Part Number: TST507FTTPMS