

# High-End Hats

COMPILED BY KATIE NAVARRA

Hatco (makers of Stetson, Resistol and Charlie 1 Horse). Both men agree: The more expensive the hat, the more the retailer needs to be able to explain the difference in materials and tell the story behind the hat-making process.

"There has very seldom been a sale missed that had enough information to justify the price," Anderson says.

## GREELEY HAT WORKS

[greeleyhatworks.com](http://greeleyhatworks.com)



CHRISTINE HAMILTON

**TRENT JOHNSON** is the fourth hatmaker to own and operate Greeley Hat Works, located in Greeley, Colorado. The boutique hattery was established in 1909. The shop is brimming with hats of all shapes, sizes, colors and styles, and has the feel of a turn-of-the-century hat shop.

"We are using the same tools that have been used since the early 1900s to make our custom hats," he says. "We share this story with our customers to create an experience [in buying a hat] that creates an emotional tie to our product."

**Capturing the high-end buyer:** "High-end hats add a sense of legitimacy to stores because they are usually more exclusive and harder to price-shop. However, they are not a good fit for every store. You have to know your clientele and be able to provide the service expected by someone who is willing to invest in a high-end hat."

**Pricing strategy:** "The key to pricing strategy for high-end hats is to remember that in this market it is more about quality than quantity. Those that will spend the money for a high-end hat are happy to know it isn't stocked a dozen deep. Although this hat is expensive, it is still viewed as a value. They are buying an experience and a story as much as they are buying a hat."

**Displays:** "Tell a story through cross-merchandising. Show how the hat ties into a certain lifestyle or experience. Again, being able to share an experience adds value. Weave in an explanation of the product to create an emotional tie to buying the product rather than solely selling the product. Look at the car manufacturer Tesla. People buy the story behind Tesla and [company co-founder] Elon Musk as much as they buy the car itself."

**Stocking strategy:** "Numbers don't lie. I usually run deeper in my core sizes. Those core sizes are different for men and women, and also different within each style."

**Trends for 2019:** "Variety. I've been seeing more crossover styles for both men and women. In recent years, boots have gone more mainstream and hats are beginning to trend that way, too."

**Bonus Tip:** "Make sure you can service the customer after the sale—that you can steam, shape, etc., for them. Also, make sure you have merchandise in other categories with similar stories of craftsmanship or romance that you can cross-sell [with the hats], such as jewelry, scarves, boots, clothing, etc."

## HATCO

[hat-co.com](http://hat-co.com)



HATCO

**CRAIG ANDERSON** has been in the wholesale apparel industry for 33 years, and in 2004 he went to work for Hatco, which manufactures and sells Resistol, Stetson and Charlie 1 Horse hats. Together, the trio of brands honors Western tradition and provides fashion-forward headwear options. Stetson was founded in 1865 when John B. Stetson made his first "Boss of the Plains" hat based on his travels in the American West. Resistol has been crafting hats since 1927, and Charlie 1 Horse is known for fashionable Western hats that break the mold and reach a variety of buyers.

"Our hats are 100 percent made in the USA," Anderson says.

**Capturing the high-end buyer:** "Educating the customer is key to getting the sale. A lot of times the consumer doesn't know why a 20X is so much more than a 6X fur felt hat. Be prepared to explain how the addition of beaver, rabbit, chinchilla and other furs changes the quality and the price."

**Pricing strategy:** "My most successful accounts are the ones who take very good care of every person who walks thru the door. People want to know that they are getting their money's worth. When you go the extra mile on customer service that shows the customer how much you appreciate their business."

**Displays:** "The best displays are the sales staff working in the store. In my opinion, every employee should be wearing a hat. Always give the high-dollar hats a special place. That could be inside a glass case or in a display where they are highlighted in some way. Ladies' fashion hats should be on display with clothing outfits throughout the store. With the higher quality fur hats, have at least one hat of every style out on display and the other sizes can stay in the box."

**Stocking strategy:** "Try new products without overbuying until you see results. Before I started selling as a wholesale representative, I started in retail. I listened to my sales representative. He was good and honest, and helped me back-stock the hats that sold well in our area."

**Trends for 2019:** "Retro is back. The styles I wore in the early '80s, including features like a taller crown, are back in style."

**Bonus Tip:** "We are experiencing one of the best years in headwear across the board—not just Western hats, but dress hats, fedoras, etc. Don't forget the consumer who might not be "pure Western;" for example, we have a line of outdoor crushable hats. Give them the comfortable choice for them. And don't forget the women's market."●