

Get in the Know With a Pro: Baja's Founder and CEO Bob Hayworth

The forecast is bright for RV and boat storage industry

Whether you've been in the RV and boat storage industry for some time and thinking about expanding because your waitlist is forever long, **or you're a complete "newbie" contemplating entering the toy storage business for the very first time**, it's always best to get words of wisdom from an experienced professional—someone with a genuine interest in guiding others to success. You want to find someone who knows how to build, what to build with, and, in the absolute best case scenario, find someone who knows what it takes to operate an RV and boat storage business of their own.

Look no further.

We reached out to a Bob Hayworth, founder and CEO of Baja Constructions and its affiliated trademarks, because he's literally spent most his life building carports and storage facilities in the industry and can answer just about any questions about building one and even how to operate one (yes, he's an avid owner, too)! He's a salt of the earth kind of guy, personable, a man who's revered in the industry because he's built his decades-old business based on old-school values of integrity and respect for the customer. There are lot of manufacturing competitors in the field, and plenty who've come and gone, but Baja has stood the test of time. Read on to find out the keys to Baja's longevity and learn more about Bob's successful journey.



Bob Hayworth is a presenter at the Toy Storage Nation workshop in Dallas this week. Look for him to share his expertise in the industry at upcoming workshops in the winter and spring, too. Details coming soon.



Why do you think it's a good time for people to seriously consider entering the RV and boat storage industry or even expanding if they are already in business?

Well, COVID-19 played an interesting role in the business. People were unwilling to travel on planes and stay in hotels, so they turned more toward outdoor recreation. RV and boat sales skyrocketed, which means their owners—especially those living in HOA-restricted neighborhoods—need more places to store them. That's good for

anyone in the RV and boat storage business. I've never seen it before—a time when RV sales

couldn't keep up with demand and boat sales were over 100% from the previous year. It shows you that the American public, those who play really hard and work really hard, are unwilling to give up their leisure time, but with the pandemic, they figured out another way to do it (safe from a lot of people-to-people contact, and getting back to nature) and for many people that translated into purchasing RVs and boats.

How were you inspired to create Baja?

I started building carports for my dad at age 17. I built carports for drive-ins, car dealerships and apartment complexes every summer until I graduated from college. At 22, I started my first carport company. In 1981, I started Baja Construction to build carports for multi-family projects and then eventually graduated into ministorage buildings and RV canopies. In 2008 after the economy collapsed, I was asked by a potential client if I was willing to pull solar on carports. I asked if they had money. They said yes, and I have been into solar ever since.

Did your growth and investment plans change because of the pandemic?

COVID helped our business substantially. We had a great year in 2021. We build a large number of RV storage canopies nationwide, approximately 6,000,000 square feet. With RV and boat sales up, and an upswing in storage facilities to meet demand, we are predicting a continued surge in projects.

What gives Baja carports the advantage over other building manufacturers of RV and boat storage?

We're a carport manufacturer supplier and installer that's been pulled into the solar industry as opposed to a racking company or manufacturer *trying to be* a solar carport builder. It's the difference between night and day. If you buy from us, we basically have run into every possible issue before and we know how to fix them or avoid them altogether, saving time and money.

I've personally been doing this for over 53 years. Making the shift to installing solar carports from building carports without solar wasn't difficult for us, and now that we've been building some many of them,

Toy storage vs. self-storage: Management differences

RV and boat storage facilities practically run themselves. An office manager, a part-time person and someone who can do minor facility maintenance and clean-up are all you need. With a covered solar toy storage, there are no moving parts, except for the automated gate and a few rolling doors if there are full enclosure units. The business can also be a cashless and paperless. A website can handle online monthly rental payments, round-the-clock access to the renter's balance and encourages paying ahead for those that rent yearly. Offering online tools gives the customer a greater sense of control over their rental experience.

- 24-hour video monitoring is your watchdog. No need for security personnel. Investing in advance security technology and features are worth the extra expense. People like the peace of mind and will pay a premium to have it.
- No need for a day or night gate attendant; a 24-hour access key fob allows clients to come and go.

The office manager is there mainly for customer convenience and peace of mind. Tenants like to interact and see a friendly face at the counter. He or she is there to answer questions, like how to winterize their RV or boat. They give tours of the facility and its amenities and offer other services such as motorhome wash, propane refill and winterizing.

the same thing holds true: If it's happened once, we pretty much know how to handle it. That's the big benefit of going with Baja. We know how to make great carports with solar, and install them faster for less cost than anybody else.

How do you build solar carports better the competition?

A lot of different solar carport companies have their own design and they don't really stray from that design. They're comfortable with that one design, and the client will have to work with that option. On the other hand, we have more versatility and creativity that comes from the experience we have in the field.

We've branched out in the last few years to do pretty much anything the client wants or needs. We'll do light gauge high tensile, which is cost effective, and that will be more important as the tax credit goes away. The bottom line is our carports are less expensive than anybody else's but they are the highest quality for design and construction.

We also do the long span using the three-plate system as they do in metal buildings. We can use the structural steel that many competitors use, which in my personal opinion is going to be harder to sell when Uncle Sam is not paying for that portion anymore. It just comes down to cost. If the government is not subsidizing it, you're going to want to go with what is most cost-effective, which is us.

Baja's Line of Carports

Baja's standard carport product line includes six standard canopy frame configurations that design engineers can use to create hundreds of canopies based. In addition, Baja's design engineers create standard carports that complement the property's environment and architecture, while meeting the customer's criteria and budget.

Engineers can also design solar-ready carports to offer customers a cost-effective option for adding panels in the future. The client can build their facility now to get the business rolling, then add solar panels when they have some cash flow. "Installing solar panels later can really get profits to take off," says Baja's Bob Hayworth.



What has you optimistic about Renewable Energy?

This is going to be another great year for solar. The opportunity for solar installations in megawatts has greatly improved. These projects vary in size from 40kW to offset facility usage to 3.5 megawatts PPA's to local utilities. The majority of populace, the government, the grid and Mother Earth all need solar. Electrical vehicles are the wave of the future. There is not enough electricity to charge them or places to charge them. They need that "free" solar power to offset that tremendous surge of power that will be needed to offset that increased consumption. A



perfect example of this kind of application is Oakley Executive RV & Boat Storage—my own project. I installed all solar canopies at the project and generated cash flow in less than a month. Solar carports are the way to go. You can power your own site as well as sell the excess power you don't use back to the utilities. For me, it's a no-brainer!

For the newcomer to the business, there are a lot of manufacturers they can consider, and most have a compelling sales pitch. How do they pick and choose so they can ensure they build a great facility from start to finish?

At Baja, we can basically help anyone design their storage project from start to finish and do it the best way possible. I think it's hugely important to point out that I've actually owned, built and loved a facility, and I can honestly say it's probably best thing that I ever did. I love the business, but more importantly for the customer, I can talk with them from a professional and personal point of view. As a company, at Baja, we've been doing RV and boat storage building for people since 1990, so for 30 years I've been taking everything we've learned—from what you should do and shouldn't do—and incorporated it into my own facility. Being that I was almost 99 percent correct, I can help you with your own particular facility in doing the same thing.

Cost and experience are probably the biggest reasons for a customer to choose Baja over other manufacturers. Are there any other reasons that they should consider?

Yes, a big benefit is that we construct our buildings with our own crews, using a team that's been trained by us, and there's no one outside of the company acting as a subcontractor on the job. If there's an issue, you've got only one guy to point to, and that's me. I'll take care of any issue that arises. That's just how we operate and that's what customers want. They want a great product for a great price with excellent customer service. That's what they get when they choose Baja.



Experience, Engineering, Expertise. Above all else.

Baja Construction Co. Inc. was established in 1981. The company also operates Solar Support Systems™ and Standard Canopies products' brand name, Baja Carports, which is a nationwide leader among solar integrators, developers and general contractors, recognized as a premier solar carport installer and canopy contractor. For more information, visit Baja.com.