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# Rocket Report

## Boost Your Business with Model Rockets

All it takes are a few simple steps to create an active rocketry department

Many people think rockets are a relatively recent invention. Robert Goddard, considered by many to be the father of modern rocketry, did indeed begin his experiments in the mid 1930s with flights lasting just seconds and only reaching altitudes of several hundred feet, but the truth is rockets have been around a very long time.

The first documented rocket flights were by a Greek named Archylas and occurred around 400 BC. These were simply wooden tubes that used steam for power. It



Starter sets contain everything needed, except paint and glue, for a consumer to build and launch a model rocket.

is well known that the Chinese invented gunpowder and were using it as a propellant for rocketry centuries ago. Even our National Anthem, written in 1812, contains the words; “and the rockets red glare” so it should be quite obvious that there is nothing at all recent about the invention of rockets.

Model rocketry got its start in the late 1950s, right after the launch of the Russian satellite Sputnik. Young people began to experiment with ways of launching their own “satellites” and were creating motors out of



The highly coveted Boy Scout “Space Exploration” merit badge is awarded in part by building and launching a model rocket. pyrotechnic materials, oftentimes with tragic results. G. Harry Stine wrote a series of articles for *Popular Mechanics* about the safety problems associated with such devices. Two brothers, Orville and Robert Carlisle, read these articles and decided to begin manufacturing a safe rocket motor for model use. In 1957 Stine tested the motors and wrote the first handbook on model rocket safety, at the same time establishing the National Association of Rocketry.

The NAR provides insurance, club contact links and hosts national model rocket launches. The organization also represents the hobby to organizations such as 4H, FAA, Boy Scouts and school science programs.



Rockets such as these Starhawk units are inexpensive and make good choices for introduction to rocketry at organized launches.

Of most importance to a hobby dealer are the statistics kept by the NAR. On an average, 2 million people will participate in a model rocket launch during the course of one year and this involves 12 million model

rocket flights. Although there are age restrictions on the purchase of rocket motors in California, New Jersey and Rhode Island, (14 years or older) model rockets are legal in all 50 states. Model rockets are also currently used by 25,000 school systems for their science programs. These figures are well documented. The potential for sales is there, and as a dealer you should reach out and take advantage of it to capture your share of this market.

Before setting up a model rocket department, Quest Aerospace recommends a bit of research on your part. The place to begin is [www.nar.org](http://www.nar.org), the home page of the National Association of Rocketry. From there you will be able to determine the number of model rocket clubs and the amount of launch activity in your market area. Also to be considered are groups, such as Boy Scouts, 4H, etc., that you have access to. Schools are an extremely important market. As noted, 25,000 schools use model rockets in their science programs. Many times teachers are not aware of the availability of a local hobby store that inventories model rockets, so they make their class purchases via mail order or the web. A simple introduction and presentation on your part is often all that's needed for a school to support its local business.

One final thought before starting a model rocket department is the education of your staff. Many dealers already have a knowledgeable staff member, but if your store is one that does not, make certain you learn all you can about model rockets and have plenty of catalogs and other easily available



*Introducing "kids" of all ages to model rocketry is easy. Find a location and organize a launch using inexpensive "make-n-take" rockets as a promotion.*

handouts on hand before attempting to establish a rocket department and making your first group presentation.

Setting up a model rocket display is pretty simple. A typical Quest Aerospace assortment takes up a space 60

inches wide, 60 inches tall and 14 inches deep. This amount of space will provide enough room for a generous selection of skill level 1-4 rocket kits, engines and launch accessories. One thing found out by Quest was

that mothers of younger children, especially those whose only exposure to model rockets is the sort of extreme rocketry shown on television, have a tendency to steer their children away from a model rocket department. As a suggestion, try placing starter sets—those that contain everything needed to get started in model rocketry—not in the rocket department but on an end-cap or other high traffic area where they can't be missed. Once a parent realizes model rocketry is safe and affordable, you will have a much easier time with product sales.

The potential for rocket sales exists in numbers beyond what many dealers realize—not only for the sale of rockets but also peripheral items. Rocket kits require glue to assemble, and many builders choose to paint and decorate their rockets in a personal scheme that reflects their personalities. The sale of model rockets does require effort, especially in the beginning, until your rocket department becomes established and your repu-

tation as a source becomes known to various groups in your area. The potential is there; you only have to reach out for the sales. **HM**



*The first time a new rocket modeler launches his creation should be filled with drama. Begin with a NASA-style countdown to build the excitement.*