

FOOTWEAR INSIGHT[®]

TRENDS, PERSPECTIVE & ANALYSIS



MEDIA PLANNER 2026

Formula4Media[®]

**PUBLISHED
BI-MONTHLY
PRINT AND
DIGITAL**

It All Starts Here.



We believe...

in the foundation and success of independent specialty brick-and-mortar stores.

Shopping is not just about commerce. There's something called the in-store experience. The touching and feeling of product. The sit-and-fit process. The curated assortment and exciting impulse purchases. The trusted service during the purchase. And, the customer's immediate gratification.

News, trends and analysis of key markets that are most profitable to retailers.



COVERAGE OF KEY MARKETS

Comfort Casual Athletic Work Running Boots Recovery Sneakers Sandals

WALK THIS WAY

FITNESS TRENDS

WALKING IS A GO-TO WORK OUT FOR ALL AGES. BRANDS ARE SHOWCASING SHOES THAT KEEP PACE WITH TODAY'S WELLNESS LIFESTYLE.

Since the onset of the pandemic, walking during free/leisure time has become the most important outdoor activity for consumers. With the world opening up, it looks to continue. In our most recent *Trend Insight* survey, 96 percent of respondents who are active and walk for fitness told us they consider walking to be a vital part of their daily fitness routine. And nearly 65 percent said they walk for fitness five or more times per week. People are walking for longer amounts of time, too. Recent data from Polar Electro, a marketer of wearable sports and heart rate technology, shows on average, across all age groups, walk duration lasting over an hour (and burning about 360 calories per session). "Walking is a modern activity format for all ages with a low starting threshold," states Dr. Rajni Laakkonen, director of science collaborations at Polar Electro. It makes business sense that footwear brands are targeting walkers of all ages and often adjusting their design to accommodate. Here's what execs are saying. *By Suzanne Blecher*

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A WHOLE NEW WORLD

WORKPLACE

THE NEW WORKPLACE IS A GO-TO WORK OUT FOR ALL AGES. BRANDS ARE SHOWCASING SHOES THAT KEEP PACE WITH TODAY'S WELLNESS LIFESTYLE.

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STEP INTO STYLE

COMFORT

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RED HOT RECOVERY

RECOVERY

THE RECOVERY CATEGORY IS EXPANDING & EVOLVING. BY SUZANNE BLECHER

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THE PERFECT COMBO

BOOTS

CASUAL COMFORT GOES HAND-IN-HAND WITH OUTDOOR STYLE. BY SUZANNE BLECHER

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FAST MOVERS

ATHLETIC

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Useful information retailers can use to make buying decisions and better run their businesses in today's competitive, dynamic market.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE


From staffing issues to supply chain headaches, retailers across the board have their hands full. But that has not stopped the best independent footwear retailers—like those honored with *Footwear Insight's* Gold Medal Service Award—from finding ways to continue to thrive. Previously, in the November/December 2021 issue of *Footwear Insight*, where the full list of the stores honored with the 2021 Gold Medal Service Award for Customer Service was revealed, we asked retailers to discuss customer service best practices in today's evolving retail environment. Here, several of those retailers talk more about the key challenges they have faced over the past several months, including supply chain, inventory and staffing issues. [A full list of supply chain issues can be found on our website.](#)

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES THIS PAST YEAR WHEN IT CAME TO DELIVERING GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE? HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THOSE CHALLENGES?

"The biggest challenges for us have been from the customer, having team members to service them. A company's culture is something that can make or break an organization so in order to not just join team members but retain them we have to have the help in all the ways down these pages. We have to have a culture that means just what it says. We have to have the ability to make it what we want it to be. We have to have the ability to make it what we have available."

—Dillon Davidson, Davidson's Shoe

"Our biggest challenges have been ones that most stores are facing. A majority of stores, almost all shops, don't understand, nor, knowing what will be received from online players, at others. We have been so fortunate because we have a fantastic sale team, some who have been in the store for 10 years, and we have a great team of local customer base. This has allowed our team to knowledgeably suggest alternative products

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Helping out a customer: Comfort One Shoes.

TRENDS
TO WATCH IN THE NEW YEAR

1 Mergers & Acquisitions

More footwear brands and retailers will be acquired in 2022. Sourcing momentum in M&A activity—+22 percent year-over-year increase to almost \$6,000 transactions in 2021—is forecast to continue into 2022 and likely for another

3-7 years, according to experts. A KPMG survey of 343 corporate administrators suggests the increased activity is being fueled by historically low interest rates, ample investment capital and a rebounding global economy. Transaction levels will remain high largely for two reasons. KPMG respondents expect "continued M&A activity among large, established companies" and to see on the offshore with the "competition" and "sell pressure from investors to raise their own valuations." Also, one-third of those surveyed believe M&A will be the primary driver of corporate growth.

stories like we're talking about in 2022? In the past two years or so, the impact of COVID shake-up the footwear business, inspiring retailers and

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3 **Retail Sales Will Slow but Few Door Closures on Horizon**
Retail sales are forecast to slow a bit in 2022 due to difficult comparisons against 2021 and 2020, the lack of

4 **Inflation and Consumer Reaction to Higher Prices**
Research and recent trends point to big price increases for footwear in 2022, certainly by Back-to-School season in June/July 2022.

It remains unclear how consumers will react to them. Will there be pushback, or will shoppers buy in complete faith in a highly coveted status they yearn? What retailers will be forced to merchandise margins to satisfy customers? And the higher product price landscape and ongoing U.S. inflation put smaller retailers at risk in 2022?



"So, inflation, in some ways, does help retail sales." D.A. Davidson analyst Michael Baker told *Yahoo Finance Live* in early January, "because it is additive to the sales dollars. We do expect a slowdown in units, however. And again, some of that is a little bit less stimulus supporting the consumer wallet, as

well as, if you need to spend more on groceries and other necessities, you're probably going to get a little less for less discretionary goods."

2022 will mark a shift from pessimism to "pragmatism" for retailers, proclaims the 2022 Spring Retail Outlook, a retail consultant and president of Speckerman Retail. "Now as retailers make acquisitions, forge new partnerships and build new retail solutions, so many options and capabilities are open to them," Speckerman said. "So they need to be more understanding of their customers and acknowledging that each retailer's priorities will be unique... There aren't any templates any more."

5 Sustainability Will Grow in Importance with Rising Influence, Purchasing Power of Millennials, Gen Z

While retailers, manufacturers and suppliers continue to grapple with how to best

remove the price barriers associated with sustainable products, the issue of sustainability remains a front-and-center issue for today's young consumers who expect their brands and retailers to be socially and environmentally responsible with sourcing, packaging and delivery. Combined, Millennials and Gen Z consumers today represent some \$740 billion in spending power.

"Companies that don't have sustainability

as part of their core value proposition need to act now to protect against future reputational impacts and loss of market share," says Shikha Jain, author of a Oct. 2021 study on sustainability and a partner at Simon-Kucher & Partners. The group found that the importance of sustainability during the purchase process continues to rise with sustainability an important purchase criterion of 63 percent of consumer goods buyers.

The sustainability efforts in footwear run deep with nearly every major brand making it at least a stated goal, and select innovators truly pushing the envelope with terms such as "radical transparency" and "circularity." The goals for eco-conscious leaders. Newer brands built on sustainability stories finding strong success — such as Allbirds (which went public last year) and Rothy's (recently receiving a major investment from Alpargatas) — are further proof of eco viability.

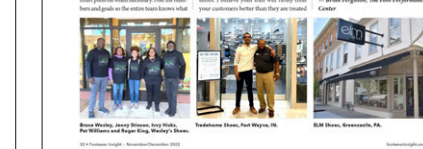
A July 2019 survey by Insight and Wharton's Baker Retailing Center of 1,000 U.S. consumers found 68 percent willing to pay more for sustainable products versus 58 percent in 2019 with the improvement attributed to more awareness of the sustainability issue by older generations. ■

RETAIL

PROFILE

Shoe Fly Creates a Buzz

The term "Shoe Fly" has been in the vernacular of most Pennsylvanians since the invention of the sticky, molasses-based pie in 1876. But it took on added significance for citizens from Pittsburgh to York, PA, in 1999

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GOLD MEDAL SERVICE AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE 2022

SECRETS TO SUCCESS

Gold Medal Service Award winning stores share some of their top customer service tips.

Talking is to science. I encourage our readers to use the phrase, but I like the restaurant's water samples the chefs, not they know what to tell their guests. Not to mention, the restaurant's food is delicious. I fully believe in the art of schmoozing. Open to all with personal lists about nothing to sell but business, then let them with the Magic of the Market. "I'm not a salesperson today!" This question will get them to open up to you, the owner, and you will have a great conversation. I encourage you to open up to the owner, and you will have a great conversation. I encourage you to open up to the owner, and you will have a great conversation. I encourage you to open up to the owner, and you will have a great conversation.

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BEST PRACTICES

Securing new employees hasn't been an easy task for years, well before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Low unemployment rates and high demand for able, qualified bodies in a multitude

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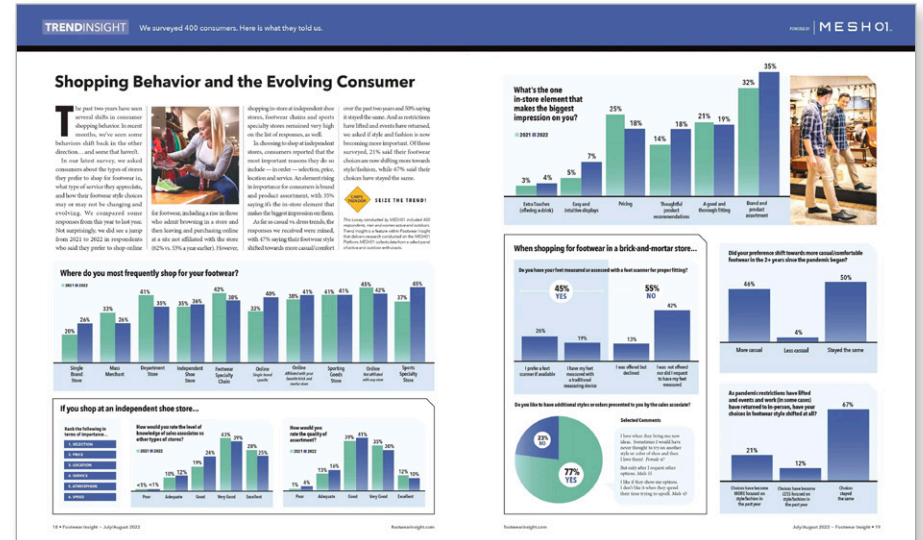
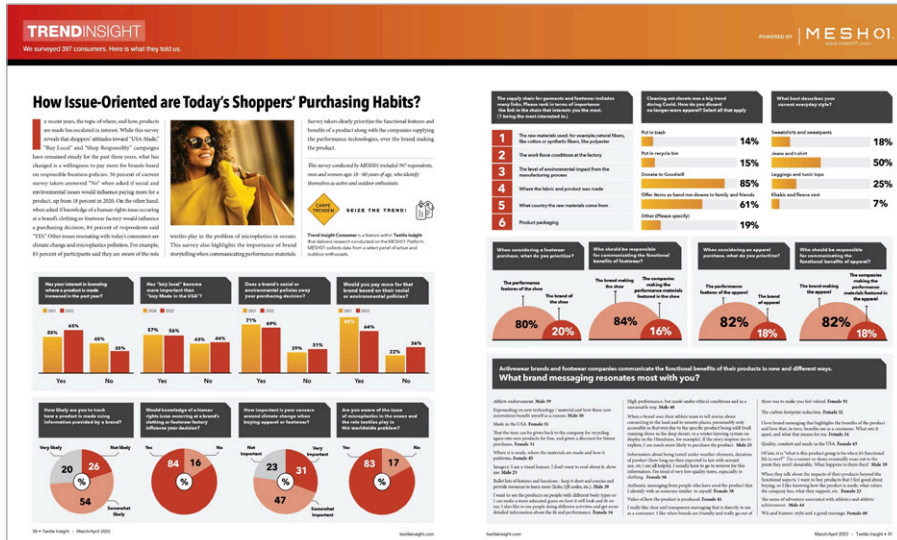
How Retailers Can Find the Right Vendors

Managing a profitable footwear business is a merchandising effort as much as it is a partnership. Selecting the right product is an art and part science. However, paying attention to the details and by doing research and seeking input from store owners can greatly improve

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TREND INSIGHT CONSUMER SURVEYS

A snapshot of what's resonating with consumers to help make smarter business decisions, inspire creative solutions, and generate original ideas.



BUSINESS REPORT QUARTERLY



RETAIL INDEX



BRAND INDEX

13 RETAILERS / 18 BRANDS
THE FI INDEX

Tracking 31 of the most important publicly traded companies that have a substantial footwear business.

RESULTS ROUND-UP
BRAND AND RETAIL SCORECARD

THE QUARTERLY REPORT:
JAN/FEB, MAR/APR, JUL/AUG AND SEP/OCT

THE BOOT BOOK

Work Outdoor Lifestyle

WORK & PLAY

OUTDOOR AND WORK BOOTS THAT WORK HARD, PLAY HARD, LOOK GOOD... AND GET THE JOB DONE. BY CRAIG GRAFFIN

Performance. Sustainability. Aesthetics. Features. Rich. Innovative. Comfort. There are some of the businesses that jump off the page when looking at the latest work and outdoor boot offerings. When it comes to highlighting right now in the boot category? And what types of technology and innovation are consumers demanding right now from their boots? Boot editors offer up some insight here as we highlight standout styles for Fall 2022 and Spring 2023.

Although not necessarily new innovations, we do continue to see more boots in the demand for off-the-job work environment. Consumers have realized that the use of a Chelsea boot, the ability to get in and out quickly with no lacing allows the comfort of a sneaker is just as appealing to workers. Chelsea boots, which have been around since the 19th century, have offerings upon boots ranging from casual to rugged. Chelsea boots are available in both composite toe as well as soft toe.

— *Joan, Liberty, Director of Sales, Farnam Equine*


"One of the most successful, as we've seen, composite boots has been the Chelsea boot, which has been a huge success for the rubber tread treads. Making safety boots. The other has been the Chelsea boot, which has been successful in the composite toe."

athletic styling like the ones we saw at TechKnives. The one that drew the most attention was the one from STEALTH KNIVES, which they purchased more than even Chelsea boots. They said they have been very appreciative of the fact that they have been able to become their materials do not compromise the integrity of the boot. In fact, we were sure that our materials would be able to hold their shape and quality forever. It's a new way to think about boots."

— *Jeffrey, President, Penland*

"The one industrial work boot that is doing really well is the one that has been the most successful in the boot market. The one that has been the most successful in the boot market is the one that has been the most successful in the boot market. The one that has been the most successful in the boot market is the one that has been the most successful in the boot market."

Kaskal / Jack Daniels While this work-safety boot, also to launch in early Spring, is a more off-duty boot in a waterproof full-grain nubuck. It has a wing-panel rubber, mud and gravel tread and 100% recycled polyurethane mesh and TPU. The boot has a Continental Edge Insole, as well as the off-duty rubber outsole and a CSA and ASTM approved met toe, and also ISO-13133, safety rating.



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THE BOOT BOOK

Best Foot Forward.

As they Spend More Time on the Move, Consumers Get Increasingly Decisive About their Footwear Needs.

Whether for work or play, shoppers know what they want from their boots, and in luxury retail fashion, As society continues to emerge from the pandemic, many consumers are looking to buy shoes that complement a new array of ever-changing endeavors. "Consumers continue to look for authentic brands, bringing great value with enhanced comfort features and functionality," explains Brandy McCarthy, CMO of the Eastman Group. "All products must be 'fashion right,' but not 'fashion forward,'" he adds. On top of that, there's technology, sustainability and even specific preferences on the shape of the boot. To gather some insight on what's trending in work, lifestyle and outdoor boot offerings, we chatted with some industry insiders. ■

By Cass Griffin and Suzanne Riecher.

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Featured in: January/February and July/August

POWER IN PARTNERSHIP



Better Together
Key Initiatives,
Product Highlights,
Brand Strategies
Shining a spotlight
on brands committed
to partnering with
independent retailers.

September/October Issue

SIT. FIT. AND BE RECOGNIZED.



Footwear Insight, working with Franklin Retail Solutions, mystery shops top footwear specialty stores in the United States. Each store is graded on more than 23 criteria (beginning with the greeting and extending through the fitting process, selection and all the way through to checkout).

Top stores are recognized in a special report, published in the November/December issue of Footwear Insight.



2026 Sponsorship package

- Logo on all Gold Medal Service Awards materials
- Logo on all promotional ads in Footwear Insight promoting Awards
- Logo on Gold Medal Service Award plaque
- Logo placement on Gold Medal Service Awards Website
- Nomination of up to 15 stores to be shopped
- Full page ad in Nov/Dec issue of Footwear Insight
- Personalized letter or coupon included in awards box given or sent to winners (supplied)

For sponsorship information, please contact Jeff Nott: jnott@formula4media.com

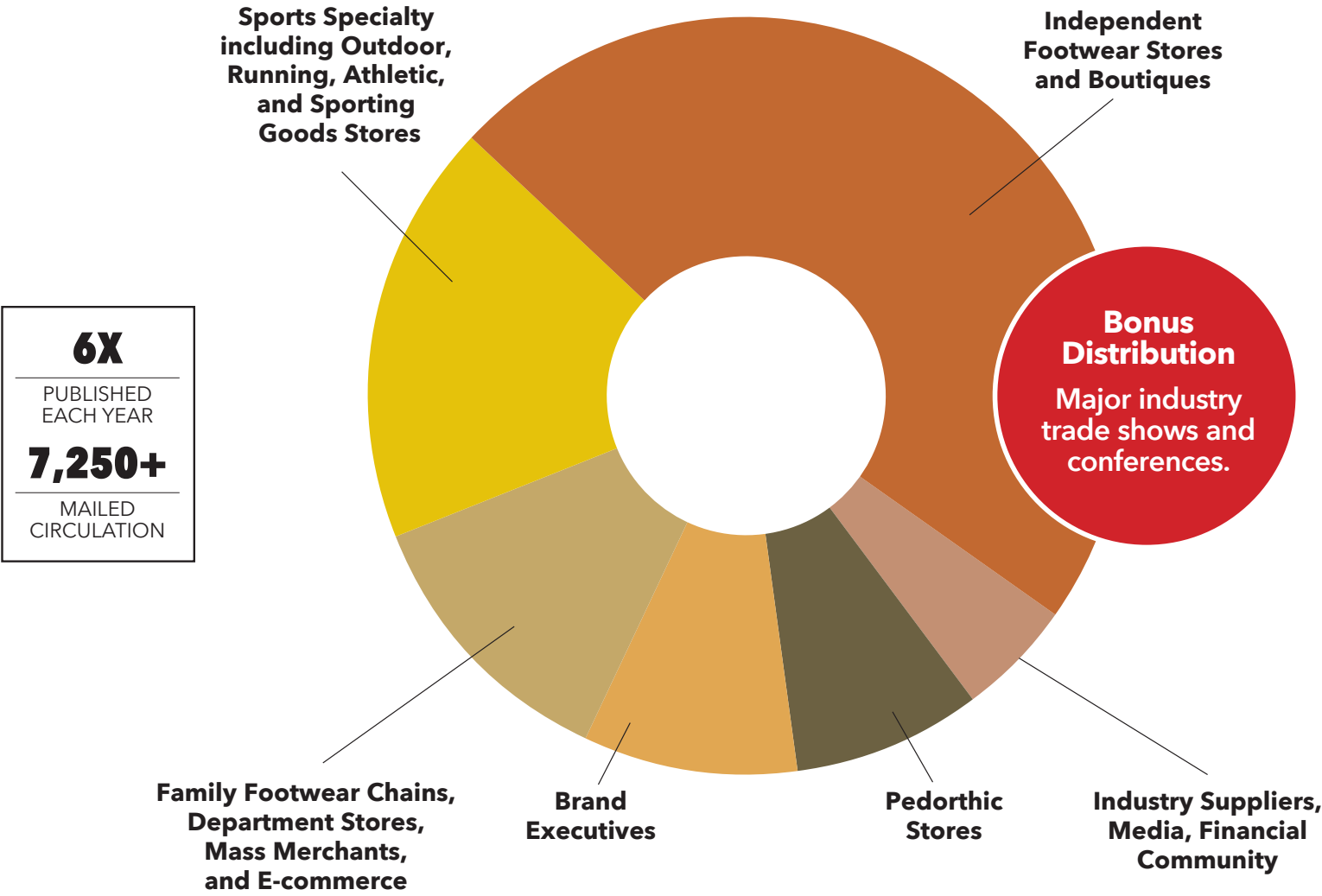


2026 MAGAZINE CALENDAR

ISSUE	FEATURES	SPECIAL REPORT	SHOW CALENDAR
JAN/FEB Ad Close 1/16/26 Materials Due 1/23/26	Comfort Socks Insoles + The Boot Book: Casual Lifestyle / Work / Outdoor / Booties	BUSINESS REPORT QUARTERLY Q4 2025	The IR Show Atlanta Shoe Market
MAR/APR Ad Close 3/26/26 Materials Due 4/2/26	Workplace Comfort: Office & Occupational Wellness & Recovery Walking Materials & Design	BUSINESS REPORT QUARTERLY Q1 2026	NSRA Footwear Forum
MAY/JUN Ad Close 5/15/26 Materials Due 5/22/26	Comfort Sandals Running		FSNYE
JUL/AUG Ad Close 7/17/26 Materials Due 7/24/26	Sneaker Style: Athleisure & Work Socks Insoles Materials & Design + The Boot Book: Casual Lifestyle / Work / Outdoor / Hiking	BUSINESS REPORT QUARTERLY Q2 2026	The IR Show Atlanta Shoe Market Outdoor Retailer
★ SEP/OCT Ad Close 9/23/26 Materials Due 9/30/26	Wellness & Recovery Style Trends Materials & Design + Power in Partnership	BUSINESS REPORT QUARTERLY Q3 2026	
★ NOV/DEC Ad Close 11/16/26 Materials Due 11/23/26	Sneaker Style Running Walking Outdoor Insoles + 2026 Gold Medal Service Awards		FSNYE

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