

*Case Study*

# NYZ Apocalypse



*As presented by*



## Introduction

Haunted attractions are some of the most highly trafficked entertainment options in the United States today. The latest trend to enter the haunt industry is the live-action zombie shooting experience, Apocalypse, from iCOMBAT. Apocalypse isn't just for haunts either. Businesses looking to provide a thrilling, fully immersive walk-through can also benefit immensely. One such business is NYZ Apocalypse on Long Island, not far from New York City.

NYZ opened in June of 2014, as an addition to the owners' current combat business, Strikeforce Sports. It was built from the ground up as an Apocalypse experience for players who wanted the ultimate spooky experience. As Pete put it, "NYZ is not just a shooting experience, it's a complete storyline adventure designed to make thrill-seekers feel uncomfortable in a post-apocalyptic environment." NYZ is not like most other haunted attractions and aims to offer so much more than just a trip through a scary maze.

Strikeforce Sports is primarily a 38,000 square foot airsoft facility, with a nerf option for the less hard-core players. They are now in their 6<sup>th</sup> year of operation, and have a bar and grill right on the premises. Apocalypse was added as an expansion when it was time to diversify. Now, they offer high impact, low impact, and no impact options for guests.



## Challenges

Pete has a motto of "if you're the best, nobody else (competition) really matters" so they set out to exceed that goal. Strikeforce was growing and they had some major challenges to overcome before they could reach that next level of success.

1. Finding a non-contact combat sport to diversify and reach the rest of the market, including all ages, genders, and demographics

2. Differentiating airsoft and laser tag in the minds of the public, namely with scoring and real-time game feedback. They did not want people to hear “laser tag” and associate it with glow-in-the-dark and neon lights.
3. Utilizing the unused square footage in the facility with new activities in order to maximize revenue

When Pete and Strikeforce were planning on expansion, their motto did not allow them to try anything else except iCOMBAT. After checking it out and hearing good reviews from similar haunt operators, they made the purchase and set out to create the ultimate experience. They saw that it was the best possible solution for what they wanted to do.

“We wanted a laser tag solution that fit our current business model, meaning no clear plastic and flashy lights,” explained Pete. “We wanted the noise and recoil.”

## Solutions

The solutions to their issues were obvious according to Pete. They decided to go with a laser tag experience that was different than their current shooting sports.

1. Decided to add a laser tag attraction because there is no other no-contact shooting sport. Their business model required guns, and this endeavor needed highly realistic equipment. Specifically, they went with Apocalypse, something a little different than a purely combat-based activity. Laser tag would also keep them afloat in case projectile-based toys ever get banned. The game was more politically correct for the New England market. They named the expansion NYZ.
2. In order to differentiate airsoft and a laser tag experience in the minds of the public, they chose iCOMBAT to bring in real-time scoring, game feedback, and live interaction. Players had hit detection, removable magazines, recoil, and various weapon attachments. “I didn’t want anything that looked or sounded like a little toy laser gun,” mentioned Pete.
3. To reach the general public, they started with a Groupon campaign to get the word out. They were careful to brand this new experience as an immersive, haunted thrill, and an extremely intense experience rather than just another combat sport like paintball. They targeted zombie enthusiasts and consumers looking for something different than just a shooting activity.

So what led Pete to trying and ultimately deciding on using iCOMBAT equipment? He explains, “The standards that NYC citizens have is incredibly high. They want the best of the best and won’t accept any kind of BS, because they have seen and tried all the gimmicks. If you’re going to do something, do it right.”

Apocalypse allowed them to do just that. They chose to invest in that high-end experience because:

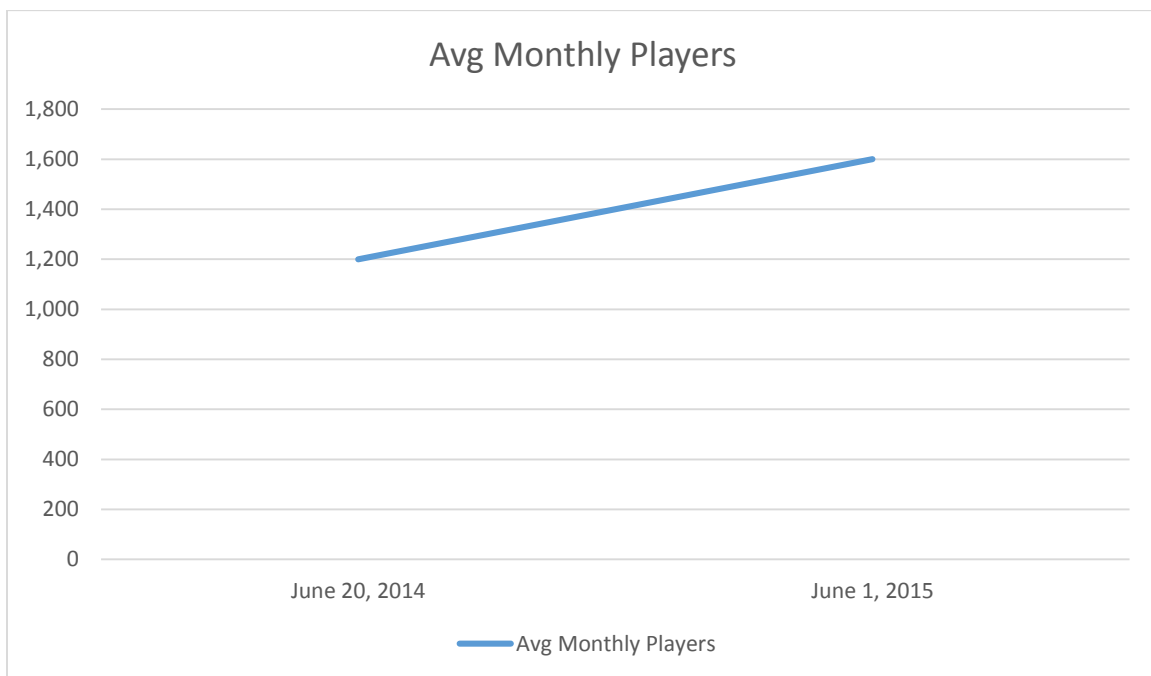
- No other laser tag system had the level of scoring and realism of iCOMBAT
- The guns are unique, with removable mag capabilities and actual felt recoil
- “No one else could provide the premium experience we desired.”

## Results

NYZ enjoyed incredible success right off the bat, and it’s not even everything the owners want it to be, yet.

They quickly began averaging 1,200 people per month on top of their other business. Today, they regularly see 1,600 people go through Apocalypse in any given month. With prices starting at \$30, and upgrades available at \$35 and \$40, revenues are at an all-time high. Any age can play, but they still recommend a minimum age of 12.

**Overall, NYZ generated a million dollars in new revenue during the first year.** This meant Pete saw his business grow by 25% in just a year! NYZ continues to grow and there is a lot more in store.



After running the iCOMBAT Apocalypse experience for some time, Pete was quick to point out his favorite features of the system and software:

- It’s very easy to use, despite the realism. “It makes sense to customers.”
- The gun’s immersion from operational items like the magazine, trigger switch, and the attachments such as scopes and grips

- The software is easy to download and use, the employees can easily be trained and customers can easily see what's going on



Pete went on to explain several of the more important items that similar businesses can relate to and solve with iCOMBAT equipment:

- iCOMBAT is much better for employees and the general public. Laser tag does not shoot a projectile, meaning the pain factor goes away despite being a shooting activity. “Employees and customers need to be considered and their pain tolerance in normal shooting sports varies, and ultimately decides how long they last or how often they come back.”
- The software allows for all parts of a combat sport to be combined: scoring, game set up, and business management.
- The social concept and player networking based on scoring, stats, and following player timelines on Barracks.
- “Most important of all, it’s profitable and the people love it,” according to Pete.

Pete went on to further explain their success, “It cost us half a million dollars to open, and we made one million after the first year. Everything paid for itself very quickly. Our business grew 25% in just one year.”

## **Recommendation**

What was the single biggest reason that Pete and NYZ would recommend using iCOMBAT to others?

“The uniqueness. I like how unique the product is. We love the software and the equipment is constantly being updated and improved. Nobody else is doing that. iCOMBAT has a huge future

and it's working very well. The company is proven and that type of security is important to a business owner.”

NYZ is leading the way among Apocalypse operators and they have plenty of plans to expand and improve the experience going forward.



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### *Please note:*

*iCOMBAT case studies are an objective look at successful operators, as told in their own words. All case studies are submitted for review by the operator prior to being published.*