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A socially enlightened big-business solution for reducing US gun violence: gun clubs for the mentally ill

Warning: Read this at your own risk. Author disclaims any responsibility for variation in sense of humor. Note that some links in this article are intended to provide useful information, others irony.

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Last week, many of America's [elite business leaders](#) threw caution to the wind and declared, in writing, that they are responsible not only to make money for shareholders, but also to advance the public interest. Meanwhile, America's most influential and creative capitalist ([hint](#)) tried to buy [Greenland](#) for an undisclosed sum and proclaimed gun control legislation would do no good without the ability to alter the behavior of the mentally ill. Now, perhaps, is the ideal moment for the government to get out of the way and let private enterprise provide socially responsible, market-based ways to reduce gun violence.

As interpreted by our Supreme Court, the 2nd amendment of the US constitution deeply embeds a right for citizens to own military-use weapons in the nation's law and culture. Gun control advocates say these weapons are so widely available and unregulated as to propel the high rate of [mass murder](#) in this country. Opponents counter that guns are merely inanimate tools: humans pull the triggers. Their underlying argument is that mentally unstable people often are responsible for the massacres, not the weapons per se, which are responsibly handled by most gun owners.

According to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), about one in five Americans experiences a mental illness during any given year. It's hard to predict when, and in whom, mental illness will occur. It could happen to most anybody. Such a large population of mentally ill and potentially mentally ill people presents a major marketing opportunity for the gun industry.

How can industry help these Americans, who [research shows are no more aggressive](#) than their [fellow citizens](#), secure and maximize their 2nd amendment

rights while helping to improve the gun safety? The solution: creating a chain of gun clubs specifically designed for people with mental illness and at risk of developing mental illness. These clubs could feature special safety rules and offer social and psychological supports along with [exquisite dining experiences](#).

At these facilities, mentally ill and unstable clients – and people obsessively worried they might become crazy or develop dementia -- could fire all kinds of weapons manufactured for military use at non-living targets and computer images. Military-style weapons, including machine guns, bazookas, flame throwers, and tanks, could *never leave the premises* and would be stored using [US military safety protocols](#) under the supervision of an armorer. Working with [managed health care providers](#), the facilities could offer psychological services at reasonable discounts so members could learn to manage compulsive behaviors, tendencies toward rage, or simply go through a process of deep self-discovery with sensitivity to chemical and social triggers that could prompt them to run amok in society without professional help.

Corporate revenue could be increased by admitting adjunct members including frequenters of conventional gun clubs who answer “yes” or “probably” or “depends on my mood” or “[F--K yes](#)” in response to a survey question: “Do you think it’s crazy that you are allowed to own a weapon you could use to kill hundreds of people in a mall or movie theater or school in a matter of seconds?” If this extended membership increased profits and kept advancing the social good, the clubs also could let gun owners who answer “no” to the same question join as well. After all, people who think it’s OK to own and carry around a weapon of mass destruction may be the craziest of us all -- but just don’t know it.

All business ventures face risks and the possibility of unintended consequences. The biggest risk to this project is that its success might prompt the government to require all owners of weapons meant for the military to use them and keep them only in designated facilities with professional safety standards. This would be an obvious form of [radical and unacceptable socialism](#). Come to think of it, once they pass a [“red flag” law](#), the courts [and mental health “professionals”](#) can take away just about anyone’s guns. Before you know it, the government will be cutting into profits, discriminating against people with mental illness, and laying down all kinds of stupid rules, such as only using military-style weapons for military purposes and restricting gun club psychologists to antiquated, uncreative

professional standards. Lost would be the [sheer enjoyment of shooting](#) with intent to maim and kill along with the truly therapeutic feelings of power it brings.