

Let's Talk™ With....Troy Quinn, Co-Owner, Exersteps

Mr. Quinn discusses buying Exersteps in 2024, the brand's new take on rocker bottom footwear, and their mission to getting more people actively walking.

ST. LOUIS, MO, UNITED STATES, January 2, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Let's Talk™: Thank you for joining us today, Troy, and congratulations on the acquisition of Exersteps. Before we talk about your vision for Exersteps in greater detail, please tell us about your background.

Troy Quinn: For 18 years, I worked in the footwear industry for a private company in St. Louis called Elan Polo. It was a mid-sized, global company which designed, produced, and sold a variety of footwear to customers ranging from Nordstrom and Neiman Marcus down to mass retailers like Target and Wal-Mart.

The company's fun, entrepreneurial, but competitive culture allowed you to gain significant industry knowledge and trade skills quickly if you were hungry to learn. Starting in product development and through years of learning all aspects of EP's operation, I eventually became the first division head for their new children's business and ended my time there as General Manager for their branded wholesale group which included global brands such as Woolrich and Tempurpedic, where we served as their licensing partner in footwear.

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We are honored to chat today with Troy Quinn, the new co-owner of Exersteps, about the history of that leading brand and his vision for the future.”

Martin Eli, Publisher

I exited Elan Polo in 2016 with a new path for opportunities outside footwear, believing shoes were in the rear-view mirror.

My partner in Exersteps, Joe Lemaster, also started at Elan Polo, where we met, but then continued his career at



Troy Quinn, Co-Owner, Exersteps

industry-powerhouse Calares (formerly Brown Shoe Co.) where he was Director of Product for brands such as Naturalizer and Ryka.

Let's Talk™: Can you tell me a little about the Exersteps brand and what motivated you to acquire it earlier this year?

Troy Quinn: Started in 2010 by Elan Polo, Exersteps is a men's and women's active and wellness brand that specializes in rocker bottom style footwear. With its uniquely curved soleplate or bottom, an Exersteps' rocker-based athletic shoe (<https://exersteps.com/>) creates an intentional rolling motion as you walk, which activates a broader range of muscles and offers a more holistic walking experience.

With its "reason to exist" being to promote body longevity, foot health, as well as an overall active lifestyle, the benefits from wearing Exersteps can vary from user to user, but, in general, they've shown to help reduce pain across the mobility triad of one's ankle, knee, and hip joints, improve posture mechanics, and minimize foot fatigue for those on their feet for an extended period of time. And with hundreds of testimonials from Exersteps' customers, they clearly have helped those with a variety of foot ailments including plantar fasciitis, Achilles tendinopathy, fused ankles or big toes, stone bruises, and CMT to name some of the key ones.

As someone who has suffered plantar fasciitis and Achilles tendinitis because of running long distance for race training or just daily wellness, I appreciate how many with these conditions or other foot ailments have been comforted by the pressure-point activation under the arch when stepping through a full walking cycle in a rocker bottom shoe. Plantar fasciitis, for example, is a frustrating and very personal condition as it impacts your everyday mobility and just becomes an annoying reality that takes a lot of time to feel whole again. This drove my personal interest for



Exersteps' new rocker bottom styles for 2025, the men's Whirlwind 2 and women's Brisa 2.

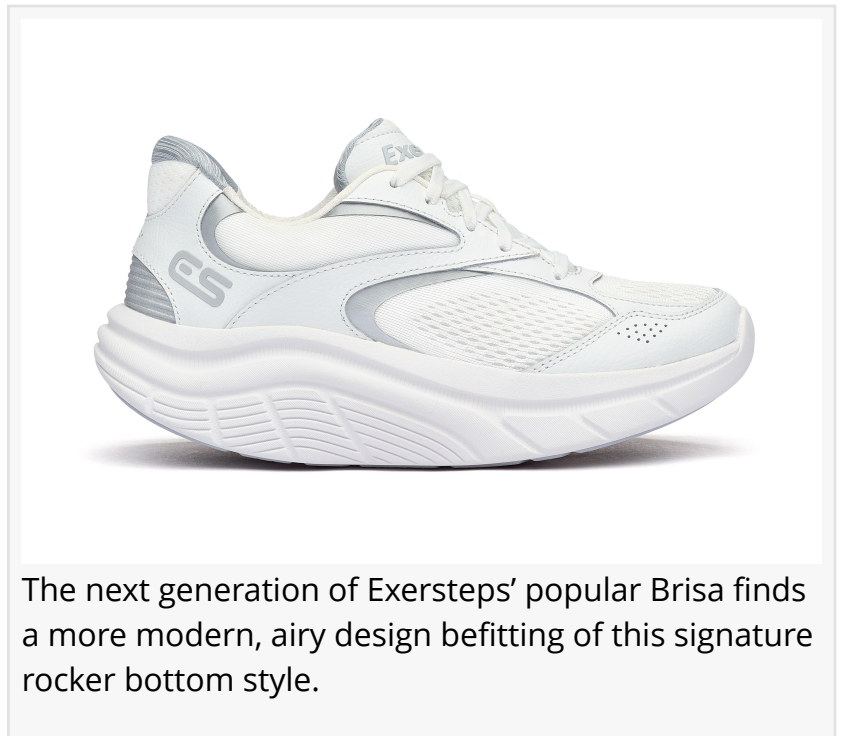


Completely updated and meticulously engineered, Exersteps' Whirlwind 2 takes the rocker bottom walking experience to a whole new level.

us acquiring the brand earlier this summer and envisioning future shoe styles and even new categories where Exersteps can help more people, let alone, just become a reason why someone brings walking into their daily routine as a compliment to running.

The name alone, Exersteps, is a simple reminder in the power of taking steps. That's something Joe and I keep as our North Star as we begin this next part of the brand's journey.

Let's Talk™: What is your perspective on the niche of Exersteps in the men's and women's active footwear space?



The next generation of Exersteps' popular Brisa finds a more modern, airy design befitting of this signature rocker bottom style.

Troy Quinn: As we become laser-focused initially on the walking category, Exersteps and its new PodiaRocker bottoms can play a pivotal role in getting more people into an active walking routine, whether making a step-count or fitness goal a little more enjoyable to achieve, becoming the go-to runner's option for rest or recovery days, providing more comfort to an existing foot condition, or even connecting motivated walkers with a local Exersteps group through our Strava Walking Club (<https://www.strava.com/clubs/exersteps>) community hub.

Our challenge is changing a consumer perception that a rocker-style shoe has limited purpose or seems "weird" to wear. In fairness to this issue and the idea of it being niche, when I tried on an Exersteps shoe when we were considering buying the brand, the first 15 minutes in the original men's Whirlwind style was an unexpected, almost negative experience when compared to what I am used to wearing which is Saucony and Nike running styles. It felt more different than expected when standing and walking to where it had me question if this was something I could authentically talk about and eventually sell. But as everyone told me, just give it some time as it's not a quick transition from the everyday flat-bottomed joggers majority of us adults wear for walking and daily use. And they were right. By the second time I wore the Whirlwinds, I understood their importance, not just as a shoe choice in the comfort walking space, but as a vehicle for reaching more people who have been sidelined from activity for a host of different reasons. That is what excited me most when we decided to buy the brand.

For us, the niche is a blessing as it allows you to speak to very distinct segments of the market, using a different voice, and bringing specific product solutions that larger, more volume-based performance brands are not able to address.

We believe the rocker bottom story, as told by Exersteps, can reach far beyond its current place

within the athletic footwear world.

Let's Talk™: What is your Exersteps customer base saying about the new styles or even telling you about why they keep buying the shoes over the past 15 years?

Troy Quinn: Initial feedback from those who have been testing our generation 2 shoe styles has been extremely positive and rewarding to say the least. The fit upgrades and design refinements have resonated strongly, even with many who have worn Exersteps for years, who can always be your toughest critic.

One such multi-year, multi-pair customer stated,
"there are no words to adequately express how grateful I am for these new 2's and the pain-free lifestyle it affords me."

Another loyal wearer in the healthcare industry expressed,
"I'm always moving on the care floor I work as I've been a nurse for over twenty years. These shoes made a difference in my feet not hurting like they normally do after a 12-hour shift. Rocker heaven!"

Lastly, a converted running brand wearer,
"Past the first hour or so, the magic will start to happen. You'll see the efficiency of the "cam like" rocking as you walk around. The cushioning is magnificent. Your gait will become more efficient and "forward" oriented."

Such endorsements put some wind behind our sails given we were heading down a new path with the product. As the brand's success was based around a couple signature styles, we knew making any significant alterations to those designs, whether function or form, could be risky. However, anytime you can improve comfort, fit, design aesthetic, and performance, you will typically be the winner of happy customers. With the new Brisa 2 and Whirlwind 2, for example, we've made over 10 product enhancements which range from decreasing the overall shoe's weight to broadening the outsole shape for improved lateral stability. The majority of improvements came directly from interviewing the Exersteps' community or reading through hundreds of reviews, good and bad.

Specific to the existing Exersteps customer, given the brand yet has very little national recognition or awareness, I was blown away by the number of customers who are 10, 12, 15-year loyalists to the brand. We have spent so much time in these early months to reach out to past customers and best understand that very question of "why they are repeat buyers" of a shoe brand that barely put out any new shoes.

For many of them, Exersteps, at first, became an alternative to options they were getting from other premium walking brands. The value proposition became a no-brainer once they were in

the shoes. Everyone has their own personal story for why they wear Exersteps and what the shoes have meant in their pursuit of active lives, which makes our purpose here even greater than before and all that more important we get it right.

We have been very deliberate in how we re-introduce Exersteps back into the market this January. Us taking the slow build, long-term approach will ensure we are not getting ahead of our skis and evolving into a footwear brand that misses on its dual mission of helping someone experience their most comfortable walk and inspiring as many people as possible to see walking as the life enhancer that it is.

Let's Talk™: What is your vision for Exersteps and what does the next 2-3 years look like in support of that vision?

Troy Quinn: Joe and I have discussed this a lot as we begin this journey of building Exersteps well past the reach of the previous business. Exersteps, to us, has the potential to become a meaningful active and wellness footwear brand and a destination name in the walking space.

Exersteps, right now, is a small brand that offers a couple styles in a specialized category of the footwear market. That is where we start and get our feet underneath us with the operations and learning best from our customers. We have plans of bringing in a new all-mesh style for both men and women in the Fall of 2025 as well as introducing wide widths in select core styles. As we get into year 2 and beyond, Exersteps will start to expand the category reach by exploring seasonal items like sandals, add more to the active offering, as well as more intentional rest and recovery footwear. Another possibility may be developing specific insoles which can either be seamlessly embedded into Exersteps branded footwear or sold separately and used across the footwear spectrum inside other brands.

Initially, we will continue selling primarily as a direct-to-consumer brand through the brand's website, which is relaunching late January in support of the new product. In addition, select e-comm platforms will also carry Exersteps but be limited in scope. Wholesale operations likely will become part of the distribution reach within a couple of years. We are doing preorders of the new Whirlwind 2 and Brisa 2 on a temporary website as we speak leading up to the market launch in late January.

We also plan to invest on the marketing side and customer engagement. A big part of any authentic active brand is how well they can build a true community around the ideals of the brand and its culture. Just think of the running clubs fostered by global names like Nike, Brooks, and Hoka or the events and competitions headlined by brands such as North Face or Vans.

We know this community build to be a slow grind if you are to do it right and to let your group be a part of its organic growth. This is one area I am truly excited to see take root and become influential in our product development, our customer care practices, and our storytelling. To that

end, the Exersteps Walking Club is active now on Strava, the leading global platform for sports and wellness participants, and where we see building out this community hub. We will also launch or support local groups nationwide as the spokes of this hub, with our first one already going in our hometown of St. Louis.

We know we have a way to go in building what will be the vision of Exersteps and next level, rocker-bottom footwear, but we believe it's going in the right direction.

For more information:

www.Exersteps.com

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Please contact Martin Eli, Founder, Founder/Publisher Email (Martin@LetsTalk.press)

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