

Heartland America Grows as Catalog-era Rivals Disappear

Heartland America, founded in 1985 as a mail-order catalog, is now an omnichannel retailer that still takes phone and mail orders, says CEO Kendra Reichenau.

CHASKA, MN, UNITED STATES, August 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Sears, Spiegel, Service Merchandise and other catalog giants of the 1980s and '90s are gone. This Chaska, Minnesota-based retailer says it survived by staying committed to the customers who built it.

As many of its catalog-era competitors disappeared, Heartland America charted a different course. Founded in 1985 in Chaska, Minnesota, the company has evolved from a mail-order business into an omnichannel retailer, while continuing to serve customers through the phone and mail ordering channels that helped establish its success. Today, Heartland America reaches shoppers through its website as well as online marketplaces including Amazon and Walmart.

According to CEO Kendra Reichenau, many retailers abandoned mail and phone orders as they shifted exclusively to e-commerce, betting their catalog customers would follow them online. Many did not survive that



Heartland America 40th Anniversary



Kendra Reichenau, CEO of Heartland America



transition. Once-prominent catalog brands such as Sears, Spiegel, Service Merchandise and Fingerhut have since shut down, while The Sharper Image filed for bankruptcy in 2008 before relaunching in 2010.

Heartland America chose a different path, maintaining the traditional channels its customers relied on while modernizing its business behind the scenes. That approach has helped the company not only endure, but grow. [Newsweek has recognized Heartland America](#) as one of America's Best Online Shops for seven consecutive years.

Search Tools Reward Longevity

AI-powered search tools are increasingly rewarding brand longevity built over years, rather than a single moment of online buzz. AI adoption has also narrowed the competitive gap between Heartland and larger retailers: the marketing team produces two to three times more content with the same staff and all departments have been able to reduce reliance on outside vendors by building internal solutions with the assistance of AI.

Customers Choose How They Order

Many longtime customers are wary of ordering online because they worry about credit card fraud. They prefer instead to call seven days a week to place an order by phone or mail in an order form with a personal check. The company added a website and marketplace listings over time, building a separate group of digital customers as it grew.

Heartland also vets every product before listing it, selling only closeout and end-of-season merchandise that has already earned a four-star customer rating or higher. The result: an average product score of about 4.6 on the review platform Bazaarvoice. The vetting process, paired with live phone support, is what keeps returns low, and the company ships about 90% of orders the next day, with the remainder shipping the day after. The return rate has held between 2.6% and 2.8% since the company's founding in 1985.

"Our philosophy has always been simple: use technology to improve the things behind the curtain, not to create barriers between us and our customers," says Kendra Reichenau, CEO of Heartland America. "We've evolved our operations continuously over the last 40 years while maintaining the personal connection that has defined the brand since the beginning."

Company Plays the Long Game

Some of that approach traces to the company's Midwestern roots: Heartland has focused on doing right by customers even when it costs more in the short term. A long-term view of customer relationships is what keeps people coming back, more than any single sale. Pricing follows the same logic: the company has held its prices relatively steady despite rising shipping costs and broader inflation, in an effort to keep serving budget-conscious shoppers through

difficult conditions.

Heartland's call center fields about 30,000 calls a month, and roughly 2,000 customers rate their calls afterward, giving the company a 4.6-out-of-5 satisfaction score. Calls average about eight minutes, compared with an industry standard of about four minutes, time that goes toward making customers feel heard rather than rushed. The company's Trustpilot score is currently 4.8.

[Customer reviews echo that experience.](#) "Heartland is easy to shop and they have great customer service," Mary Millhauser wrote in a review. "I missed a chance to save on my order, and they e-mailed me to get in touch about it. I called them and a real human being picked up the phone. They were so nice and helpful. Great experience! I love the products I ordered."

"We have a great appreciation for our customers choosing us over all the other options out there," Reichenau says. "We show our appreciation every day. That's why we win all these unsolicited awards."

About Heartland America

[Heartland America is a trusted, value-focused omnichannel retailer](#) founded in 1985 in Chaska, Minnesota. What began as a mail-order catalog business has grown to include a website, marketplace listings and phone ordering, selling closeout and end-of-season merchandise across tools, home goods, apparel and electronics recognized for customer service excellence. The company has been named one of Newsweek's Best Online Shops for seven consecutive years and has been recognized by USA Today for its customer service.

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