



Attracting Women, Part 1

Female-only events bring in new and veteran riders

My last column focused on how to sell more motorcycles to women. This column explains how to get those women to your dealership in the first place. One question you should be asking yourself is: "What is my share of the women's market in my community?" While women riders have been around for a long time, only recently have they been referred to as an actual market segment.

One way to attract women to your shop is by holding a women-only event. Many dealerships are doing this now, and the feedback I'm hearing from owners is that these events are so successful they're being held year after year.

Women-only events can be divided into two categories: 1) those aimed at current riders (like a motorcycle maintenance seminar held for a couple of hours on a weekend afternoon) and 2) those aimed at new riders. I've spoken at several women's events, and I've found that the ones targeting new riders also attract experienced riders.

How do you reach those nonriders? Ask riders to bring a nonriding friend and offer an incentive for doing so like a 20-percent-off coupon on merchandise. Consider a larger incentive if the nonrider ends up buying a motorcycle. One dealership I visited gave a \$250 certificate good toward the purchase of clothing.

Women love deals. This is an easy way to get them to spend money in your store. If your party ends up convincing just one woman to take a

training class and buy a bike from you, isn't that worth it? If no one ends up buying a bike, I can guarantee your cash register will ring during the event, which leads me to the type of activities that could go on during a women's function. Consider these ideas:

- Seminars on how to choose a first bike or how to customize a bike already owned.

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- Demo rides for licensed riders.
- A panel discussion of notable women in the industry. Topics should be part inspiration, part know-how.
- A keynote speaker with a goal to inspire.
- A fashion show.
- Lunch or hors d'oeuvres.

I was the keynote speaker at a Ladies Night gathering where invited nonrider guests included local female business leaders. The catered food offerings included chocolate-covered strawberries and champagne. The owner made a thank-you follow-up phone call to all who attended. Two women ended up taking the training class and buying a bike from that dealership.

Other good ideas:

- Have a door prize or a raffle to

gather names for your mailing list.

- Offer departing participants a goody bag with coupons.
- Have your participants wear nametags so it's easier for them to network with one another.
- Have representatives of local women's riding clubs there to talk about what they offer.

Should you charge for admission? I've been to some events that charged \$10 to \$15. Most are free, though. Admission price depends on how much of an investment you can bear. I think the event should be complimentary. If you don't see a return on your investment that day, you certainly will over the coming months when those women return for gear, gifts and possibly a bike.

Use these events as a marketing and research opportunity. Come up with three to five things you'd like to know about your female customers, like what they look for in a dealership, how many other dealerships they've visited, and what they've seen in your store so far that they like. Have your staff casually ask the participants a couple of these questions during the course of the event. The next day hold a meeting where your employees share what they learned. Incorporate that newfound info into your sales and marketing plans. There's no better way to get to know your future female customers than by talking to them firsthand.

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