



Stocks, Bonds — and Bikes

Take some cues from the financial services industry

Selling a motorcycle to a woman is a lot like selling her financial products such as mutual funds, IRAs and stocks. You must make sure the woman understands what she's purchasing, and you must build trust, because the product taps into the woman's emotional needs.

The financial industry has been engaged in female-focused marketing campaigns for the last decade to successfully break into the women's market. The powersports industry can learn from what financial institutions have accomplished.

"Being conscious of women's needs is a deliberate decision," says an executive at a credit union in Reading, Pa. "Recognition of women's importance is a vital first step."

Exclusive education. Banks and investment companies hold women-only financial seminars that are less intimidating for female customers. Consider holding exclusive riding events and service classes for your female customers. Women respond to group settings; they ask lots of questions and often feed off each other's energy. Women are not as self-conscious when other women are around.

Outreach. Money markets and motorcycles are traditionally male domains, so sellers of both can't wait for a female customer to walk through the door.

A woman's life is stressful and busy. She may never get around to visiting your store. To get in her appointment book, you must make the first move. Just as an investment

company shows a woman why she needs to invest in an IRA for her retirement peace of mind, a motorcycle dealership can show her why she needs to ride a motorcycle in order to de-stress her life.

Female-friendly ads. Another way investment companies have achieved success with the women's market is by changing the look of their marketing materials. Women

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respond to human examples of the message rather than statistics. They also respond to coupons or "call to action" ads.

But be careful: Motorcycling is a male-dominated sport, so don't alienate the men when modifying the look of your ads. An alternative is to consider genderless ads featuring just the product rather than people. Harley-Davidson has been doing this for years. Some of its motorcycle campaigns feature a single bike parked in a dramatic setting with an engaging tag line.


Using a bikini-clad model to get a message across is so "yesterday." Women own or co-own lots of motorcycle businesses, including those that produce vehicle components. Using a woman as eye-candy in an ad may turn off any potential female business. If you must use

people in an ad, consider a lifestyle image of a man and a woman riding side by side. It seems to make sense to encourage the sale of two bikes instead of one.

Female-friendly store. More and more banks, credit unions and investment firms make sure that their business environments are appealing to female customers. For example, in-store marketing placards will feature women on them. Messages that relate services to life events like buying a first home and starting a home-based business have more appeal to women.

For a dealership, in-store displays can tie products and services to the motorcycling experience. An example would be a display or marketing piece that plays up the convenience and expertise of your service department so customers spend less time with their bikes in service and more time out riding.

A female-friendly dealership is an inviting place for a woman. Does the sales staff smile when she walks in? Do they greet her when she enters the store? Do they say thank you and goodbye when she leaves? This always gets my attention. Do they make eye contact?

A woman wants to connect with a place with which she plans to do business. Make an effort to become her friend. She's carved time out of her schedule to stop by your dealership. Make it worth her while. 

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