



## The Rise of Riding Groups

### Dealers who get involved also get new customers

One of the most popular sections of my online magazine, WomenRidersNow.com, is the "Connect With Others" link. I get e-mails from women riders all over the country wanting to hook up with other women riders. The seekers are mostly new riders, but sometimes are women tired of riding with their husbands. The section acts as a virtual bulletin board.

I see this desire to connect with other riders as a golden opportunity for a dealership. In an effort to attract more women to your shop, you can lead the effort in your community by becoming involved with a local women's riding club. Following are a few ways you can get involved, help women connect, and then profit from the relationship.

**Contact existing women's riding clubs.** Does one exist in your area? Throughout the country there are hundreds of women's riding clubs that aren't brand-specific. Women on Wheels, Women in the Wind, and Chrome Angels are some of the larger ones. Contact the chapter directors to find out whether the clubs would like to hold their meetings at your dealership. If you have a customer lounge or a picnic area outside, put it to good use.

**Why do you want to do this?** To get women riders in your shop, particularly those who've never visited before. While the women are waiting for the meeting to start, they'll undoubtedly browse the aisles, and may even spend money. That's what women do.

Consider offering an incentive like

a 20-percent-off coupon just for them and good for that day only. They're likely to arrive early for the meeting just so they can shop and use the coupon.

**Start your own women's riding group.** Certainly your sales staff knows a few dynamic "self-starter" women riders in the community who would be interested in starting an informal riding group or forming an

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official club. Tell them you'll act as the host dealership, providing them with a place to meet, and referring new woman riders to the club. But let them handle the mechanics of organizing the group, because it releases you from any liability.

Again, as an incentive for the group to align itself with your dealership, offer **coupons or establish a "refer-a-friend" program** that awards a gift certificate for referring a customer who then buys a bike. As the host dealership you're providing the group not only a place to have its monthly meetings, but also a gathering spot for the start of its weekly or bimonthly group rides.


Men are accustomed to hanging out at a dealership and shooting the

breeze with their friends. Women don't "hang" — they need to be doing something. Hosting a women's riding group gives the ladies a reason to come to your shop to do something. You'll benefit by the additional foot traffic.

### Get to Know Them

Now, with all these women browsing through your store waiting for a meeting or a ride to begin, use this opportunity to get to know them. Hand them a short marketing survey. Ask them about their buying habits, what they expect from their local dealership, and what they like or don't like about what you're currently doing.

Why go to all this effort to court women? Because they are the most influential segment entering our sport. Plus, old, traditional marketing strategies won't work on today's busy and demanding female customer. You may have to work a little harder to get her business, but in the end it's worth it. She'll reward you with loyalty and referrals for years to come.

If after reading this you're not interested in playing host to a women's group or club, then do what I'm doing: **Provide a bulletin board** for riders to connect with one another. If the board is neat and up-to-date, I guarantee riders will make a point of stopping at your shop just to check out the latest postings. 

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