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# Dealernews

VOL. 49. NO. 10 OCTOBER 2013  
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**You can't 'curb judge' anyone. You can't tell who can buy and who can't buy just by looking at them."**

— Brad Schroeder



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## On the cover

Village Motorsports' Brad Schroeder has an open mind — for new technology and new customers. He asserts that nine out of ten people who walk into his dealership are buyers — they just need the right financing deal. Our cover story begins on page 30. *Photography by Jeff Barger*



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## EDITORIAL

Contact the editors at: editors@dealernews.com

Group Content Director	MARY SLEPICKA
Group Creative Director	BETH DEMONT
Senior Editor-Parts and Accessories	BRUCE STEEVER
Senior Editor-Retail News, Legal/Regulatory	HOLLY J. WAGNER
Senior Editor-Gear, Helmets and Apparel	BETH DOLGNER
Senior Editor-Business Services, Finance, OEM	ARLO REDWINE
Contributing Editor/Editor-Dealer LAB	JOE DELMONT
Columnist/Contributing Editor	MIKE VAUGHAN
Columnists	ERIC ANDERSON, RICK FAIRLESS, TORY HORNSBY, DAVE KOSHOLLEK, ROD STUCKEY
Special Correspondents	GEORGIA KRAUSE, TRACY MARTIN
Photographers	JEFF BARGER, JOE BONNELLO, BRETT FLASHNICK, EDWARD LINSMIER, GARY ROHMAN
Audience Development Manager	KRISTINA BILDEAUX

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Sales Representative	TIMOTHY DEBTH JR • 440.891.2713 • <a href="mailto:tdebth@advanstar.com">tdebth@advanstar.com</a>
Sales Coordinator	CHRISTINA ANDERS • <a href="mailto:canders@advanstar.com">canders@advanstar.com</a>

Advertising Production Manager	JESSE SINGER • <a href="http://www.adsatadvanstar.com">www.adsatadvanstar.com</a>
Senior Production Manager	KAREN LENZEN

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# FROM THE EDITOR

Mary Slepicka

## 'Why We Ride' is why others should, too

**IN THE FALL RUSH** of superhero action movies and Halloween-timed gore fests, I'd like to recommend a documentary just now being released, called "Why We Ride."

Produced by Walking West Entertainment and Gnarlynow Entertainment in association with Santa Susana Studios, "Why We Ride" is glorious filmmaking. I had the opportunity about a month ago to watch a pre-screening in Los Angeles. The film is set to be released as a Hollywood premiere in early October.

"Why We Ride" is not a story about motorcycles but about those who ride them and support them. It speaks to the artistry of the journey, and includes everything from breathtaking West Coast and Black Hills scenery to a racing slow-motion interlude that mimics ballet. Whether you are a performance shop or a Harley store or a family dirtbike dealership, your lifestyle is in this film.

But artistry doesn't make the film exclusionary. Quite the contrary; "Why We Ride" illustrates why others should consider joining.

Along the journey we witness interviews with some of the pioneers of modern motorcycling, including Don Emde, Mert Lawwill, Troy Lee, and Ed Kretz Jr., who unfortunately passed away in September. (A companion film about Kretz Sr. is in the works.) We listen to Laura Klock and her daughters at Bonneville. Everyone talks

about how they started out, and the nicks and scrapes they had along the way. We all rode minibikes as kids. We all hid our first motorcycles from our moms. We all made mistakes, wiped out, dusted ourselves off and got back on. We know these people.

That experience is common whether one is a world champion or a backroads traveler, and it makes the notion of motorcycling accessible, not intimidating.

If there ever was a film to become an ambassador for getting people into the sport, it's this one.

"Why We Ride" will have theater showings and home video distribution. The producers told me that they would like to work with dealerships across the country to secure screenings for "Why We Ride" at local theaters. If you're interested in helping them out, contact Mike Shell, dealer program director, at [mike@whyweridetour.com](mailto:mike@whyweridetour.com).

See "Why We Ride." Get it shown in your market. And if you can, take someone with you who does not ride. You might just create a future customer.

Mary Slepicka • [mslepicka@dealernews.com](mailto:mslepicka@dealernews.com)



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## Selling on consignment

THE SECONDHAND GEAR RETAIL TREND CATCHES ON

DEBBIE BURGESS has 10,000 items from 715 sellers in her Jacksonville, Fla., consignment shop. What sets her, and a small handful of others, apart is that her shop, **2nd Ride Around**, deals exclusively in motorcycle gear and apparel.

Motorcycle gear consignment is a relatively new trend. Burgess says she has accepted consignments from 12 different states because riders cannot find local outlets for consigning used jackets, pants or casual apparel.

Sherry Bush, who owns **2nd Ride** (no relation to Burgess' **2nd Ride Around**) in Lakewood, Ohio, has built an inventory of 800 products since opening on July 16. She chooses to purchase most of her second-hand inventory outright.

What's trending will differ by area. Bush says many of her customers want saddlebags and other luggage, but she adds that gloves and rain gear are popular. Burgess says her inventory is about 95 percent Harley-Davidson-branded gear and apparel. Sources vary from individual consignors to estate sales.

Consignor contracts usually run 90 days; if a piece doesn't sell within that time, the owner has to take it back. "We kind of follow the same trend as retail. If someone brings me a leather jacket to consign [in the summertime], I'll explain to them that because it's 98 degrees right now the chances of selling their jacket in the next 90 days is slim to none," Burgess says.

Selling used gear and apparel has two tricky facets: choosing which gear to sell and determining the right price. Both Bush and Burgess stress the importance of inspecting all gear closely, checking for wear and tear, and even testing zippers to make sure they function properly. When it

comes to pricing, both owners refer to sites like eBay.

"While the customer is here, I'll look it up on eBay," Bush says. "It gives me an idea of what things have sold for in the past. I also look to see if they're consistently not selling."

These shops will pay owners roughly 40 to 50 percent of retail, more if the product has not been worn and if the tags are still attached. Once an item sells, Burgess says she splits the money 50/50 with the consignor. She never discounts, but if someone offers a lower price for an item, she will call the consignor for the final decision.

— Beth Dolgner

### CONSIDERING CONSIGNMENT?

*If you want to offer secondhand gear...*

...decide whether you want to buy gear up front or have a traditional consignor agreement. Buying up front is a bigger financial risk, but a consignor program requires detailed recordkeeping.

...realize that every piece needs to be thoroughly inspected for wear and tear: beat-up gear will not sell.

...capitalize on the fact that kids grow out of their gear quickly, so carry kids gear or start a gear exchange for young riders.

...price at about half of retail, with consignors usually getting 40 to 50 percent once the piece sells.

...take advantage of word-of-mouth advertising: Ask your customers what they have stashed in their closets that they may want to sell, and learn what they want to buy.

"There [were] a handful of dealers that we were working with, not just domestically but internationally as well. They were sworn to absolute secrecy, and they were pretty damn good at it."

— Harley-Davidson President & COO Matt Levatish on how they kept Project RUSHMORE under wraps for so long

## NUMBERS

# \$74 million

Amount federal prosecutors say several former dealers in the Chicago area made in a multi-year loan fraud scheme which included, among other allegations, filing flooring requests for fictitious VINs.

# 36

Number of federal indictment counts levied in late August against the former dealers and related parties.

# 25,000

Quantity of models across all 2014 vehicle lines Harley-Davidson said were ready to be shipped to dealers by mid-August.

# 40

2014 Chiefs already presold at Indian Motorcycles Lincoln by early August.

# \$4,999

Starting MSRP of Sea Doo's new Spark personal watercraft. OEM hopes to attract new buyers to the PWC market.

### Ride in Peace...

**Ed Kretz Jr.**, racer, Southern California dealer principal and AMA Hall of Fame recipient

**Randy Lusk**, principal at El Dorado Cycles, a Suzuki, Triumph and Victory/Polaris dealer in Missouri



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## WHAT'S TRENDING ON DEALERNEWS.COM

### DEALER OPERATIONS > SALES

**Harley-Davidson 2014 models deliver more power, easier handling** Project RUSHMORE takes input from riders, dealers and thousands of road tests to produce enhancements in control, information, feel and style.

**BRP unveils Sea Doo 'Spark' at \$4,999 MSRP** OEM offers a 900cc 4-stroke PWC for nearly 40 percent less than comparable entry-level models from the competition.

**Honda returns several motorcycle lines for 2014** Capitalizes on strong 2013 rollout by supporting 1300 Custom line, Shadow, Rebel and XR650L for new season.

**Kawasaki dealer meeting: Teryx is star of the show** But OEM also takes over San Diego for Ninja 1000 rollout and investments in its PWC line.

**Can-Am supersedes SxS lineup with Maverick, Commander MAX 1000** Four-seater Commander MAX is all-new, while Maverick line adds a big, muddy brother.

**Suzuki returns QuadSport Z90 youth model to ATV lineup** \$2,899 kids quad debuts alongside a roster of KingQuads for 2014.

### DEALER OPERATIONS > MANAGEMENT > BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS

**KTM rolls slowly but firmly back into street sales** Senior Editor Bruce Steever talks with head media guy Tom Moen.

**Brown's Cycle Service thriving after Year One** Bandera, Texas, shop holding its own.

**Retro Wrench succeeds in lower-end vintage repair, customization** Shop finds a niche by catering to 'the middle'.

### DEALER OPERATIONS > SERVICE

**Two Brothers Racing posts California emissions info** Aftermarket exhaust maker to provide help for CARB-weary dealers; follows similar offering by Cycle Shack Inc.

**Gilles Tooling to accessorize upcoming Yamaha FZ-09, MT-09** New range of billet accessories will be available first in Europe.

**Dux Signals offer safety, functionality to UTVs** Turn signals for on-road compliance gives you another display option in your parts department.

### DEALER OPERATIONS > MARKETING

**Indian's new in-store marketing system lets customers control the big screen** Interactive digital platform for showrooms streams OEM and related content from big screen to touchpads.

**Speed-Way Motorsport Shelters offers mini-display** Countertop mini-shelter available for minimum dealer purchase.

## DEALERNEWS

**CALIFORNIA** – San Luis Obispo gets a new multiline when a sister store to Santa Maria Honda and L.A. Harley-Davidson opens. SLO Motorsports will carry Yamaha, Moto Guzzi and Vespa.

**FLORIDA** – Mary Ward-Markane and husband Juris Markane open custom shop Bad Roses Motorcycles in Bunnell.

**ILLINOIS** – Black Diamond Harley-Davidson in Du Quoin is one of the Illinois Lottery's newest retailers and becomes the first Harley dealership in the nation offering lottery ticket sales.

**MICHIGAN** – Luna Entertainment Group reportedly becomes the biggest Harley dealer concern in the state after adding Brighton Harley-Davidson to the family.

**MISSOURI** – Big St. Charles Motorsports decides not to provide space for stunters during the Ride of the Century weekend after local authorities set up a motorcycle checkpoint across the street from the dealership.

**PENNSYLVANIA** – Retiring after a 20-year run with Smaltz's Chester County Harley-Davidson, owner Karen Smaltz hands over the reins Oct. 1 to Joe White, owner of White's H-D and Iron Valley H-D. The transferred dealership will be renamed Harley-Davidson of Chester Springs.

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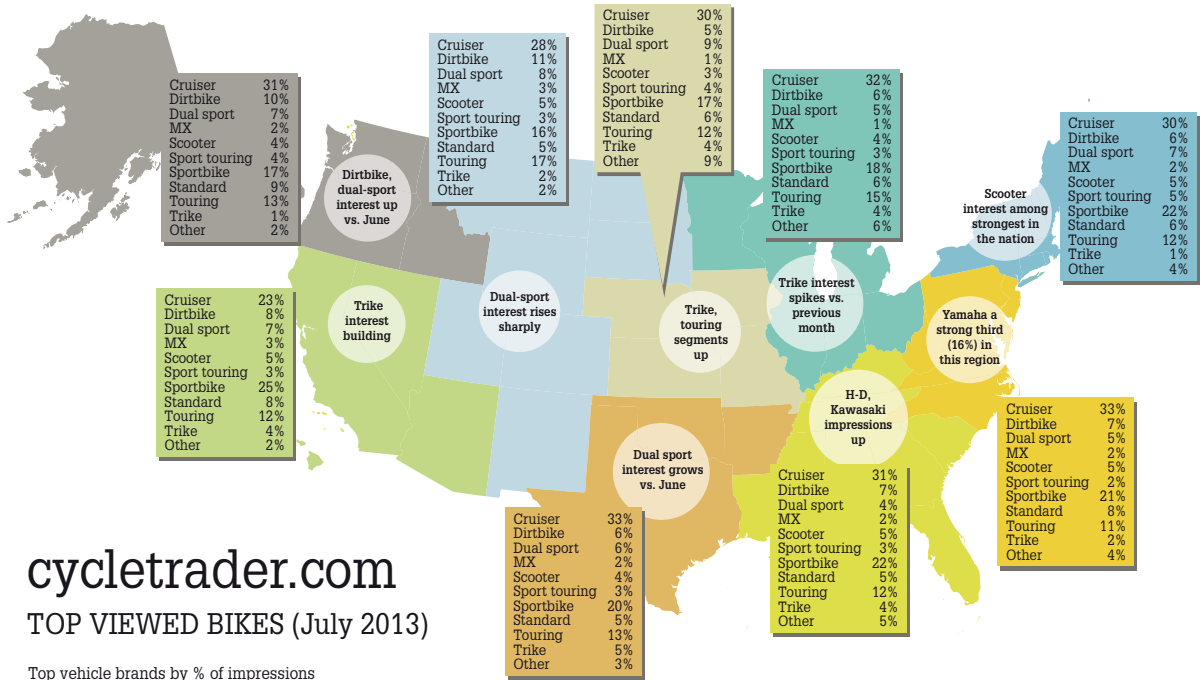
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# SPEED READ



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Top vehicle brands by % of impressions

<b>Central Plains</b>	Honda 26%, Harley-Davidson 23%	<b>Northeast</b>	Harley-Davidson 18%, Yamaha 15%	<b>Rocky Mountain</b>	Harley-Davidson 23%, Honda 18%
<b>Great Lakes</b>	Honda 21%, Harley-Davidson 19%	<b>Pacific</b>	Honda 20%, Harley-Davidson 17%	<b>Southeast</b>	Honda 22%, Yamaha 17%
<b>Mid Atlantic</b>	Harley-Davidson 20%, Honda 18%	<b>Pacific Alaska</b>	Yamaha 20%, Honda 18%	<b>Southwest</b>	Honda 21%, Harley-Davidson 19%

Consumer study of vehicles enthusiasts are reviewing online at CycleTrader.com. Study conducted by Dominion Insights, which collects data and reports to dealers and OEMs. Find out which specific models received most consumer interest at <http://dominioninsights.com/dealernews>



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**JASON REVS UP** The legendary Jason Britton gets up in the air during the Kawasaki 'takeover' of San Diego's Gaslamp District during last month's dealer meeting. (Photo by Bruce Steever)



**WPS SNOW MEETING** Rep Dave McCord (center) wins a Caribbean Cruise vacation for outstanding achievement in the Divas SnowGear Spring Pre-Season Sales Contest. Giving McCord the thumbs up are Wendy Gavinski, president and founder of Divas SnowGear, and Travis Mayne, distribution channel sales manager for the brand. Nearly 40 vendors rolled out products to WPS reps at the distributor's National Snowmobile Sales Meeting held in September in St. Paul, Minn.

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## SPEED READ

### CONTINENTAL GT500 MAKES A 'ROYAL' DEBUT

ROYAL ENFIELD CHOSE LONDON to introduce the long-awaited Continental GT 500. The new bike is evocative of the company's 1962 GT250, with almost identical Café Racer styling but featuring an obviously updated engine, frame and suspension.

In a world where motorcycles come equipped with such things as ABS, traction control and other electronic gizmos that lift responsibility from the rider to a black box, it's refreshing to ride a new motorcycle that still requires the rider to be totally involved in making decisions and actions that affect their ride. Siddhartha Lal, managing director and CEO of Eicher Motors Ltd, parent company of Royal Enfield, said the GT500 is a throwback to simpler times and gives a nod to England's Rocker lifestyle of the late '50s and early '60s.

Unlike most of today's motorcycles, all the elements that define a motorcycle are visible and easily accessible. The engine is a simple but up-to-date 535cc, air-cooled, Keihin fuel-injected, single producing 29 hp @ 5,100 rpm and 32.5 ft. lbs. of torque at 4,000 rpm. The bike is equipped with both electric and kick starting (for those who want an authentic '60s experience).

Power is put to the rear wheel through an easy shifting, five-speed box, and chain drive to the ground via Pirelli Sport Demon tires, 100/90-18 in front and 130/70-18 at the rear.

The GT's double-down tube cradle frame was designed by the renowned frame maker Harris Performance Products Ltd. of the UK, and built at Royal Enfield's factory in Madras, India. Attached to this are a number of high-quality vended parts, including twin rear Paioli gas shocks with adjustable preload and 3 inches of travel. At the front end is a pair of non-adjustable, telescopic, 41mm forks offering 4.3 inches of travel. Atop the forks are a Smiths-like speedometer and tachometer, with analog speed and rev indicators, and digital trip indicators. A traditional green light lets you know when you're in neutral. Brakes, both front and rear, are from Brembo, featuring a 340mm floating disc in front with a dual piston caliper and a 240mm disc in the rear with a single piston caliper.

The model intro in September called for a trip to Box Hill, one of South England's better collection of twists and turns and a 'must' destination for any serious motorcyclist. Unfortunately, due to a late start from the Brooklands we had to take a pass, and instead headed directly to Brighton Beach, scene of the legendary two-day brawl in May 1964 between Rockers and Mods, as depicted in the movie Quadrophenia.

The M23 to Brighton is four lanes and generally straight, except when passing through a roundabout. As a result it's difficult to comment on the bike's handling, except to say that it steers easily, changes directions quickly and is capable of sustained freeway speeds in the 60 to 70 mph range.

The five-speed gearbox and eager revving engine along with the bike's relatively lithe 405 lb. weight (with 90 percent fuel and oil) provide quick acceleration, and the fifth gear allows a reasonably high cruising speed without annoying vibration.

The clip-on style handlebars, rear sets and firm racing-style seat with bum stop provided a surprisingly comfortable riding position for my 5'11", 190 lb frame and 30-inch inseam. Watching other journalists ride, I was surprised by the fact that even large riders didn't seem to dwarf the bike, and it looked good no matter who was on it.

About the only criticism I have is that while the bar-end mount rearview mirrors are stylish and well-matched to the overall design of the bike, they're way too small. On the bike I rode, the foot brake pedal was set too high, but this is merely a matter of adjustment — and if we'd spent more time with the bike, I would have done so.

While this isn't the fastest, most advanced, mid-displacement bike on the market, it does offer unique styling and a level of engagement not frequently found on modern motorcycles. "The Continental has no excess, no complication, you can see all the mechanical parts, you can fix it, change it, and if it's dropped, it's no big deal. It's simply fun to ride," Lal said. (See our related article on Royal Enfield on page 43.)

— Mike Vaughan





**SPOKES**

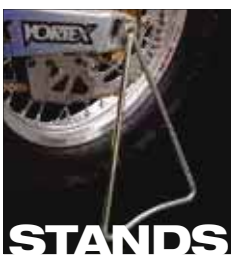


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\*Kit shown is TWS-206AH

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# The Mentor Gap

LET'S FORM A NETWORK OF 'BIG BROTHERS' TO HELP NEW RIDERS



**Eric Anderson,** CEO of Vroom Network, based in Southern California, is an industry veteran and has fathered several motorcycle apparel brands. Contact him at [editors@dealernews.com](mailto:editors@dealernews.com).

## On the Web:

Eric Anderson's previous column, "It's not about your damn motorcycles," can be read online in our August 2013 digital edition. Access it for free at [www.dealernews.com](http://www.dealernews.com) (click on "EZINES")

**GENERALIZATION:** The more skilled a rider you are, the more "moto-snobbery" keeps you from stooping down to help new riders to elevate their game by improving their skills and experience.

Experienced riders and racers by nature don't have patience for backmarkers — they want to go longer, faster and harder than newcomers. Seems like those of us spending the *most* time on two wheels have the least time to spend with those of lesser skills and experience.

The downside is that newbies can become frustrated and quit altogether. I call it The Mentor Gap. Other than close family members, we cluster with riders of a similar skill level. Rather than sharing their secrets, riders with greater skills and experience prefer to wheelie off into the sunset, because who wants to show a newer rider how to countersteer, apex properly or pack for an overnight trip?

My last column (*Dealernews*, August 2013), "It's not about your damn motorcycles," created a stir by pointing out that our dream machines are actually secondary to the human experiences they create. It's all about the people, friends, family and the human experience of riding these vehicles together. You can be a club rider, racer, family rider or Helge Pedersen riding solo around the globe, but it all comes back to people and places — friends you meet and scenes you see at the beginning, along the way or at the end.

Wikipedia's definition of *vehicle* is a *mobile machine that transports passengers or cargo*. The key word to me is *transports* — not *machine*. Unlike other planes, trains and automobiles, powersports machines truly *transport* the human experience into another dimension of existence.

Problem is, dealers and current riders need to learn to share our transportable discoveries with newcomers beyond the simple selling or acquisition of the machine. MIC statistics reiterate this problem: The average annual miles ridden for a street motorcycle is 2,903. There is no need to buy another dream machine if the first one is less than one-twentieth worn out and its battery is dead. Craigslist and eBay are littered with dreams gone stale.

On the other hand, I know other newcomers to the industry who already have three different bikes in their first 18 months of riding. What's the difference in their experience from those who lost their fire?

Mentor Gap assumes there are too few Big Brothers in our industry. Riding is a lifelong progression for those hooked on it. But too many newcomers don't stay long, because it's challenging to make the leap from newbie to veteran without some outside help from a friend or caring dealer. And the vets are too hung up on riding for themselves.

I am more selfish and guilty than most. I need to change that and begin giving back.

## BIG BROTHER ATTITUDE NEEDED HERE

The same feeling gets portrayed at the parts counter and on the sales floor in your dealership. "Assumptions" of customer expertise get thrown into the conversations, and new riders are reluctant to stop the conversation and ask, "What's a super-moto?" *Big Brother attitude needed here.*

The MSF's Basic Rider Course trains more than 400,000 new riders a year. But that's just the primer — it's not the real world or the real thrill. Track Day schools are terrific, too, but there tends to be an "intimidation leap" between street skills and track skills. How does one find his way from being an MSF graduate to becoming an accomplished road or dirt rider without some form of real world, intermediate mentorship? *Big Brother attitude needed here.*

A patient friend? A private coach? Dealer clinics? These are few and far between. We hire SCUBA instructors, music teachers and personal trainers, so why not hire a private riding coach to teach us some new, higher level riding skills? Encourage your newer riding customers to take MSF's 1-day Advanced Rider Course on their own motorcycle, then coordinate a track day for a few customers. Make it a social event — not a test of manhood and machismo. Not only will your customers learn some new riding skills, they will also become much more familiar with their new motorcycle's capabilities and their newly transported self. *Big Brother attitude needed here.*

Can your dealership staff take a bit more time when handling a newcomer? The dreamers are at the fragile stage and thus need to have the inspiration and mentoring to achieve their dream. Don't just sell them the machine, sell the how-to sizzle, too. Twice recently I took the time to mentor some new riders, and it was incredibly satisfying. I not only have the satisfaction of sharing my knowledge and feelings about riding, but I've gained two new riding friends. And reciprocally, I am enrolling in a track day to learn a few new tricks myself. Can dealerships do more of the same? *Big Brother attitude needed here.*

My life isn't racing as much as it used to — literally. Slowing down a bit and taking some time with my friends or customers makes the entire riding experience more fun and longer lasting.

So let's all make it an industry goal to keep those dream machines from going stale in garages across America and bump up the national average to 4,000 miles a year. We'd all be selling more bikes, accessories and replacement parts, not to mention enjoying ourselves more. *Big Brother attitude is definitely needed here!* **D**

# KIDS & DIRTBIKES

DEALERS MUST BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN YOUTH RIDING – IF ANYTHING, TO ENSURE A FUTURE CUSTOMER BASE

By Beth Dolgner

**PLENTY OF TODAY'S RIDERS** got their start when they were kids, either zipping through a field on a minibike or conquering the local peewee motocross competition. Getting kids involved in riding sometimes means overcoming economic factors, the lure of other sports and dwindling land usage. The challenge for dealers is to not only reach out to the youth market, but to get them riding for years to come.

Motorcycling is a generational sport in many families, and one of the easiest ways to reach the youth is to entice the parents. Bill Savino, motorcycle press manager for American Honda Motor Co., says, "It's much more the family: We camp, we like to bring dirtbikes out, and we like to ride. Dad had a bike, and so the son gets a bike. That's one of the reasons we like some of the smaller bikes — like the CRF125 — to look like the bigger bikes, so they can be just like dad or mom."

Even in offroad racing, families get involved. Jeff Massey, vice president of operations for the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA), says, "Typically you'll see dad and son, or dad and son and daughter, even moms who are geared up and racing with their kids. That's one of the beauties of the sport: It's truly a family sport that everyone can participate in."

James Holter, managing editor for AMA, notes that "there's some evidence that there's been greater participation in various types of motorcycling. In the '70s and '80s, motocross was the big one in terms of youth competition, but we're seeing an increase in hare scrambles [and] trials, and we're seeing kids out there racing a lot of different things."

The shared love of riding across generations takes on a more sentimental note for many families. Mike McCommons, who owns the Durhamtown Plantation offroad facility in Union Point, Ga., says that parents often say that riding is the only activity their whole family enjoys together. Parents also get to teach lessons about things like teamwork.

"When there's an obstacle they come upon, they solve it together. It generates unity: it brings families together. I see it every week," McCommons says.

Enticing parents to get their kids involved is one thing, but getting them to shell out money for a motorcycle is another. A lot of kids are turning instead to less

expensive sports, like BMX, which can prepare them for dirtbike racing later. McCommons says that about 30 percent of Durhamtown's 75,000 annual visitors are kids and women, but his youth participation has dropped about 75 to 80 percent in the last four years.

Savino agrees that pricing is one of the biggest hurdles when it comes to getting kids on bikes.

"The big thing that we're really fighting against is trying to keep the cost down," he says. "We've tried to keep the cost similar to what it was five or six years ago. We're working with plants across the world with that same quality and trying to build that same Honda product we've always built, but make it something a family can afford."

McCommons suggests that one reason fewer kids are riding is because it's harder to find a cheap little motorcycle for a few hundred dollars, and parents may be hesitant to spend over \$1,000 for a bike that their child may or may not enjoy. Still, there are some less expensive options, like minibikes or some pre-owned vehicles, that bridge the gap between "my kid is trying out this new hobby" and a commitment to riding.

With such economic factors to consider, dealers have to make parents — and their kids — eager to buy a new bike. Getting involved in the community and showing support of local youth riding is paramount to supporting and building the market.

## LOCAL INVOLVEMENT

Savino notes that after selling a bike, a kid still needs somewhere to ride. "The two things that are really important that we affect is trying to keep land usage, and also the dealer base across the country," he says. "Youth coming into the market today are our motorcyclists of the future. Hopefully down the line when they are 15, 16 or 17, they are using a motorcycle for transportation day in and day out."

Sometimes, getting involved means delving into riding issues, like land usage rights and showing support for offroad recreational facilities.

"Dealers need to be actively involved in their community with riding areas, local tracks and things like that," says Thor MX Brand Manager Jamie Foreman. "Stay active in your community, stay active in what's







Getty images

going on, organize a group of riders that either write letters or are actively involved in the community and state recreation parks."

Dealers can also propel sales by giving kids the chance to ride, whether it's through a dealer-sponsored course or through partnering with groups like the Motorcycle Safety Foundation.

"The biggest thing we have is our rider education centers. We have them all across the country, and we highly recommend families to go out and learn to ride, on-road or off-road," says Savino.

Durhamtown offers a First Time Rider program that allows kids to rent a bike or ATV, or both, for a day. McCommons was surprised when a father and son showed up all the way from Miami to take advantage of the program.

"He said his son had been wanting to learn to ride, so they hopped on a plane," McCommons says. They rode for four days, he adds, "then they flew home and bought a bike back in Miami."

That hands-on approach can sell motorcycles, but so can something like showing up to support local youth racing and riding. That involvement can range from sponsorship to setting up a place for riders to get replacement parts, tire changes and other trackside maintenance.

Getting kids inside the dealership takes a community-minded approach, but Massey says that dealers should consider the future impact of supporting youth riding now.

"I probably would have never made the jump as an adult if it hadn't been for my experience on a bike as a youth," he says. "In order to maintain a healthy sport and maintain a large riding base, kids need the opportunity to ride and race at that age. They are the future of motorcycling." **D**

# Get 'em riding!

By Beth Dolgner

**THE TREND FOR 2014** youth gear focuses on more entry-level apparel options combined with top-of-the-line safety gear. Manufacturers are introducing less expensive off-road wear, like pants and jerseys, so parents don't have to spend too much on gear the kids will eventually grow out of. At the same time, safety is more of a buzzword than ever – and remember, the one thing parents will spend money on is keeping their kids safe. Here's some of what's been introduced to the market for your younger clientele.



## MSR YOUTH AXXIS

MSR has taken the cue to increase entry-level youth options with the new Axxis line of jerseys, pants and gloves in six color options. The Axxis is available in adult sizes, too. The youth jerseys (\$24.95) and gloves (\$17.95) are sized from XS-XL, while the pants (\$69.95) are sized for youth 16-28.

[www.msrmx.com](http://www.msrmx.com)



## FULMER GOES ENTRY-LEVEL WITH GOGJR GOGGLES

Fulmer's latest goggles are an entry-level offering in both the youth GOGJR and adult GOGAD options. A low price point (\$19.95) is paired with anti-scratch and anti-fog technology. UV protection, a non-slip silicon-backed adjustable strap and enhanced peripheral vision are other perks. The GOGJR and GOGAD both have six color options. [www.fulmerhelmets.com](http://www.fulmerhelmets.com)

## THOR PHASE EXPANSION AND NEW BLITZ BOOTS

Thor's biggest news in youth gear is the company's return to youth boots with the Blitz (\$119). During Thor's youth boot hiatus, the company completely rethought and redesigned the youth off-road boot, which comes in sizes 1-7 so kids about 5 years old and up will be able to wear them.

Thor has discontinued the youth Core line but has made up for it by expanding the less-expensive Phase line of jerseys (\$29) and pants (\$89) to 12 colorways. The Phase is now the brand's sole youth line, with some of the color options matching the adult Core line for families who like to match. [www.thormx.com](http://www.thormx.com)



## LEATT FUSION 2.0 GIVES YOUTH COMPREHENSIVE PROTECTION

The Leatt Fusion 2.0 (\$249.95) gives young riders a comprehensive protection option that includes a neck brace as well as protection for the shoulders, chest, back and flank. The 3DF Airlift foam used for impact protection is CE-certified, and it is perforated for ventilation. The S/M and L/XL size options for youth are available in white, red, orange or green. [www.leatt-brace.com](http://www.leatt-brace.com)



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**ANSWER RACING**

Answer Racing has the Nova Youth helmet (\$99.95) and Youth Synchron pants (\$69.95), jerseys (\$24.95) and gloves (\$17.95) for the young off-road rider. The Nova Youth comes in three sizes and has five color options as well as Rockstar Energy and Skullcandy branded designs. The Youth Synchron has color-coordinated designs in six options. [www.answerracing.com](http://www.answerracing.com)

**100% STRATA JR. GOGGLES ENGINEERED FOR KIDS**

The new Strata Jr. goggles from 100% are a simpler version of the Accuri Jr. with a lower price point of \$24.95. The Strata Jr. comes in four colors and shares the same lens as the Accuri Jr. (\$34.95), which has eight color options. 100% says its youth goggles are specifically engineered for younger riders. [www.ride100percent.com](http://www.ride100percent.com)



**AFX FX-17 HAS ONE SHELL, CHANGEABLE LINER SIZES**

The new FX-17 youth helmet (\$84.95) from AFX comes in one shell size; however, several liner sizes means that parents can swap out liner thicknesses as their child grows. There is no shortage of graphic options for this off-road helmet – they include a long list of color options and graphic designs with names like Rebel and Rocket Boy. [www.afxhelmets.com](http://www.afxhelmets.com)



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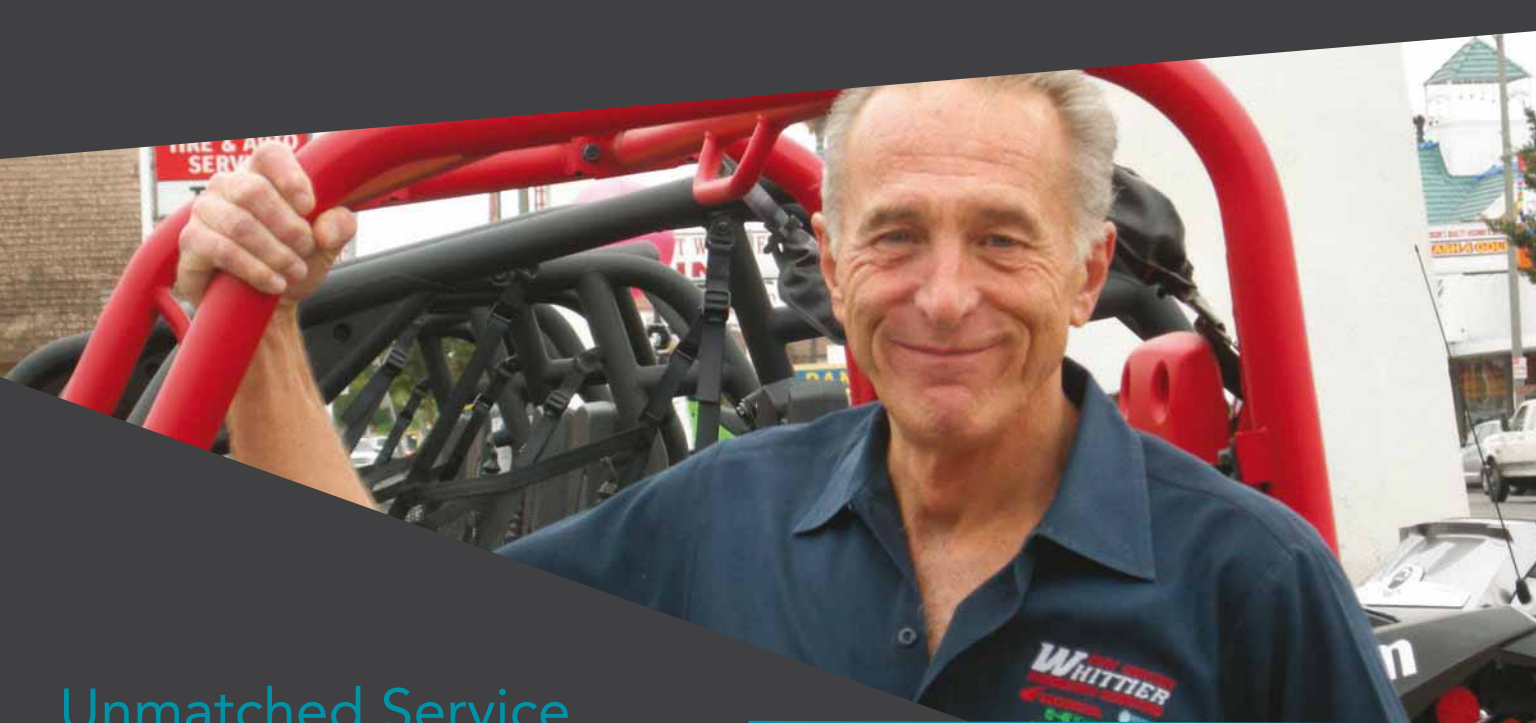
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Located just a few miles from Los Angeles, Whittier, Calif., boasts one of the world's largest Spanish-speaking populations.

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After unsuccessfully wading through different options in Google, Gobrecht found the answer with some guided, expert assistance: **PowerSports Network's TotalCare**. The service that Gobrecht – and other PowerSports Network dealers use – provides monthly expertise to dealers at a minimum expense.

That's allowed Gobrecht to transform his site's service department offering from a traditional one-pager to a dynamic presence, featuring custom pages with corresponding pricing and images for each service he offers.

Plus, thanks to TotalCare, Gobrecht is now getting online leads from one of the largest Spanish-speaking populations in the world.

Read more how Whittier uses Dominion Powersports Solutions at [www.dominionpowersports.com/unmatched](http://www.dominionpowersports.com/unmatched)

“(Our TotalCare Account Manager) understands the concepts, she understands the business... She gets it.”

Tom Gobrecht from Whittier Fun Center uses PowerSports Network's TotalCare

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# It's tech-hunting season

HERE'S HOW TO ADVERTISE, INTERVIEW AND SELECT THE BEST CANDIDATES FOR YOUR SERVICE DEPARTMENT



## FUEL FOR THOUGHT

**Dave Koshollek** teaches sales and service classes for dealers. Contact him at [dakoenterprises@cs.com](mailto:dakoenterprises@cs.com), or via [editors@dealernews.com](mailto:editors@dealernews.com).

## On the Web:

For additional ideas on how to interview job applicants, check out:

- 29-Smart Answers to Tough Interview Questions at [www.businessinsider.com](http://www.businessinsider.com)
- 14-Revealing Interview Questions at [www.INC.com](http://www.INC.com)

**AT A RECENT DEALER MEETING** I was confronted with the age-old question, "Where can I get a good tech?" I've been asked that hundreds of times. Where to find good entry-level and A-level technicians just may be the No. 1 challenge for dealers.

Autumn is the best time to hunt for technicians. Most shops postpone hiring techs during the slow season to reduce payroll. Then they compete with every other shop in the country when the spring rush arrives.

Take a tip from Keith Lewis, service manager at **House of Harley-Davidson** in Milwaukee, who hired three entry-level technicians from the Motorcycle Mechanics Institute (MMI) last winter. His timing gave him pick of the litter and a couple of months to acclimate the new hires to the personalities and procedures of his service department before business ramped up again.

When searching for entry-level techs, I suggest starting with the motorcycle technical schools in your area, or at least setting a filter to interview those who have connections with your region of the country. There's no sense moving someone to the Snow Belt if they grew up in Southern California.

Knowing how to decipher school transcripts is critical for identifying the best candidates. Call the graduate placement department at the appropriate institution for help. If the individual graduated from MMI's Harley-Davidson program in the last year, ask them for their scores in the Dealer Service Operations section. Every Harley graduate has to take this six-week finishing school, and it's the best measurement of their technical skills (see "Fuel for Thought," *Dealernews*, January 2013.)

When searching for experienced techs, start by advertising on your website, Craigslist and the local newspaper. Or cast a bigger net by advertising in major cities within a certain radius of your shop, and finally use online resources. You want to post an ad that gets published in minutes or, at most, days.

You need a written job description for that lists job duties, work environment, and requirements such as training, work experience, a valid motorcycle driver's license and personal tools. Realistically describe the work and what differentiates your shop from others. For example:

- List the scope of job responsibilities, noting key information, such as "Wanted: Entry-level tech - A-level tech to perform routine service, electrical diagnostics and engine rebuilds. Predominantly work quick service bay. On all brands. 50% UTV service, repair. 4 to 5.5 days a week." Set realistic expectations, because dealing with short-tim-

ers due to a misunderstanding of expectations is much more expensive and energy-draining than looking a little longer for someone who is a better and longer term match.

- Differentiate your shop from others to attract like-minded individuals: "Dynojet Tuning Center. *Dealernews* Top 100 Dealer. Best events in the state. Family values a priority. MX sponsor."
- List employee compensation and benefits: "Health care assistance. 401K. Flexible work schedule. Salary plus incentive. Profit sharing. Continuous education support. Range of pay." ("Range of pay" may offend some owners, but to attract individuals that stick it's important that they know what to expect.)

Another question I get a lot is, "What should I pay?" The answer is not too different than for the question, "What labor rate should I charge?" It's calculated by local cost of living, cost of housing and what other similar businesses are charging and paying. If you're paying the least you can, it should be no surprise that your best techs are quitting to work at the local car dealership. Do a little mystery shopping to find out what your competition pays.

When applicants apply, use a stepped interview approach that filters the good candidates. Then do a personal interview and onsite testing to make the final decision.

## DEVELOP A 'BIG' QUESTION

When I was national director of Harley-Davidson Training at MMI, I had five questions for phone-screening instructor applicants. One was designed to determine their knowledge of factory procedures, ability to communicate and how open-minded they were: "Tell me how to adjust the throttle cables on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle from start to finish." This was often performed wrong, so I could gauge the individual's knowledge of correct procedure and their ability to communicate what was a moderately complex series of operations. In most interviews, something was conveyed incorrectly or omitted — at which point I politely interrupted by saying, "Actually, what you just described is incorrect." I then paused to see how they would respond. If they argued — or worse, got upset that I dare disagree with them — the interview was over. I did not want to hire close-minded prima donna personalities.

Finally, consider making drug screening, a criminal background check and viewing the applicant's Facebook page part of your interview process.

Good luck, and leave the rifle at home — technician hunting is a no-kill sport. **D**



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# Making online personable

SOMEONE ON YOUR TEAM NEEDS TO BE DEDICATED TO YOUR WEB EFFORT



A former dealer principal, **Rod Stuckey** is the founder and president of Dealership University and Powersports Marketing.com. Have a question about retail marketing? Contact him via [editors@dealernews.com](mailto:editors@dealernews.com)

## On the Web:

Read more of Rod Stuckey's columns on [www.dealernews.com](http://www.dealernews.com).

**MANY DEALERS INVEST** millions in their facilities to improve sales and provide an enhanced customer shopping experience, and in today's market there are more mega dealerships than ever before.

I recently ran into an old industry friend I hadn't seen in years who was commenting about this very fact. He observed that there are very few Old School shops anymore. His dad was a dealer back in the '70s and '80s when the franchised dealers had tiny showrooms connecting to a parts department consisting of a counter with peg board behind it and the only available accessories hanging out of customer reach.

And he's right; very few of these old school dealers remain. He then went on to tell me what a shame it is that there aren't these types of shops around anymore, and said he was considering opening one. I thought to myself, *Well the reason we don't see those types of shops as much as we did back then is because those who chose not to change with the times didn't survive.* I bit my tongue and politely agreed that many of the new superstores are much less personable than the Old School days.

Fast-forward two decades. Now it's not just the brick-and-mortar showroom that will be required to change, it's the virtual showroom as well.

It is estimated that three out of four potential consumers conduct their initial research online. Regardless of how nice your facility is, without the right web strategy these consumers may never make it in to see your dealership.

## WHO'S GOING TO DO IT?

So the case for an Internet manager gets stronger and stronger. I've heard the arguments that "you can't sell a motorcycle online," and I agree. However, the most successful dealers understand that what you do online does have a big impact in what you do offline.

Who is responsible for ensuring all of your units have multiple quality photos taken and put online in a timely manner?

Who is responsible for researching online comparables and pricing those units?

Who is handling the leads, setting up templates and scripts, and responding to email inquiries?

Who is managing your chat? Implementing your CRM? Updating your Specials, Team and About Us pages?

When consumers research commodity-based products online, the only way a merchant can separate themselves from their competition is to have "Here's why you should choose us" messaging woven throughout the site. Who owns this responsi-

bility at your dealership? Who is measuring your site analytics, evaluating online marketing performance by vendor, tracking lead response times, closing ratios, etc?

## WHY PHIL GOT THE LEADS

I was in a dealership working with the principal when an employee, a part-time school kid, began sharing the poor results (about five leads a month) he was getting for used units online. He was using an automatic posting tool to list the inventory on Craigslist.

A recently hired sales person named Phil was trying to make something happen and had posted two ads on Craigslist earlier that morning. He had no idea the store was using the automatic posting tool and was posting the ads the old-fashioned way, one at a time.

On that Wednesday I observed Phil work two deals and close one with leads generated from his two ads.

I asked the school kid why Phil was able to get two leads in one day from posting the same bikes on Craigslist that he had been posting daily for several months only to generate an average of five leads a month. Without hesitation, the young man stated, "Well, because Phil's ads are much more personable and interesting." He said it in a completely innocent manner, as if everyone should know.

I had the young man show me his ad on Craigslist and then show me Phil's ad. Both ads did a good job of the virtual walk-around with lots of photos, but then there was a distinctive difference. The dealership ads simply stated the default specs of the unit and then the price. Phil's ad, by contrast, told a story about the bike, had a call to action, and was personal. He used descriptive features like "rides like a new bike" and "has fresh tires." He touched on the reliability by referring to it as a "one owner" and "certified pre-owned." He then concluded by mentioning that this would be a "no hassle" transaction and added, "Call Phil direct on my cell: I'm located just south of high prices."

This was a great learning experience for everyone, and it exploited the need for a dedicated Internet manager and an integrated web strategy that incorporates all departments' roles and responsibilities with regard to web performance.

Just as facilities have evolved over the years, so must your web presence. Ironically, investing time, money and resources into your online virtual showroom may be your best investment to ensure you can continue to pay for your offline brick-and-mortar. **D**



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# SEEING THE LIGHT

FROM DIGITAL SIGNAGE TO BOWLING (THAT'S RIGHT) FOR CUSTOMERS, VILLAGE MOTORSPORTS CHARTS ITS OWN PATH

By Joe Delmont • Photos by Jeff Barger

**THERE ARE FOUR MAIN** roads that bring you into Grand Rapids, Mich., and Brad Schroeder owns them all.

In a manner of speaking. MI 131 comes in from the north and south and I-196 runs in from the east and west. The first thing you see when entering town on any of these roads is a giant 20 x 40 flashing digital sign promoting **Village Motorsports**.

"We dominate those corners," says Schroeder, the fast-talking general manager of Village Motorsports and its sister store in Holland, 35 miles west.

But that's only the tip of the digital iceberg. There are 30 large HDTV screens in the two stores, 16 in the flagship Grand Rapids facility, where they are placed in every department, including Service. There are five screens on the showroom floor alone, where they carry programming that promotes new and used units, financing and the riding lifestyle.

Programming includes a mix of streaming editorial from a variety of sources, creating a flow of news and riding tips mixed with product information and sales alerts to capture viewer interest. This is especially important on those screens in customer wait-

ing areas, such as the lounge in the service department, where the screens also contain information on available services.

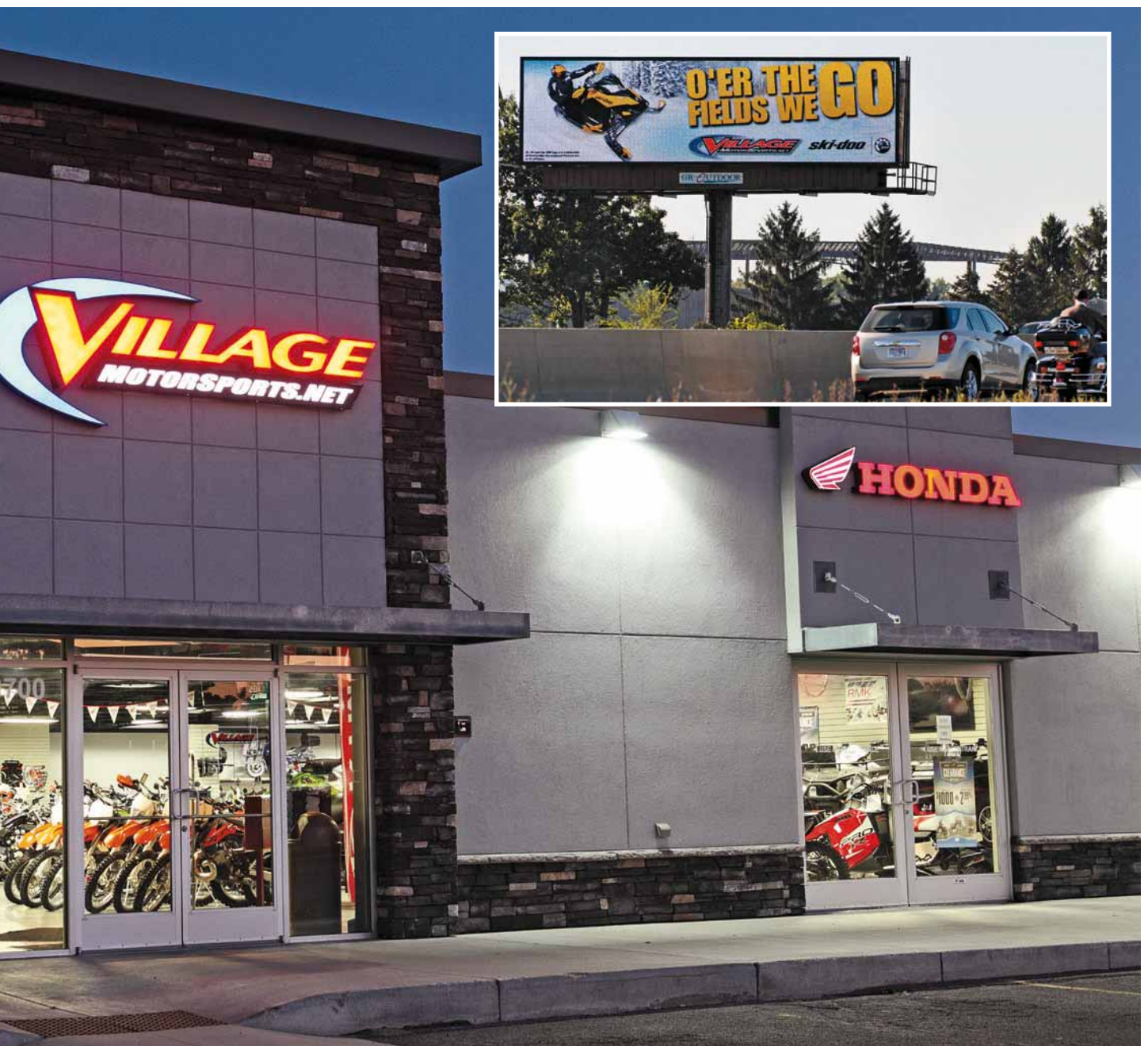
The two stores carry 16 brands, including Polaris and Victory, Honda, Suzuki, Kawasaki, Ski-Doo, KTM, KYMCO, Arctic Cat, Sea-Doo, Spyder, Can-Am and Yamaha.

The Grand Rapids store sold 949 units last year, including 439 ATVs, SxS units and dirtbikes, and generated total revenues of more than \$13 million. This year, the store is on track to hit nearly \$15 million in revenues. Through June the store sold 349 off-road units (ATVs, SxS and dirtbikes) and expects to sell close to 480 this year. Nearly 50 percent of the store's revenue this year will come from dirt machines.

Village Motorsports, a *Dealernews* Top 100 dealer for three years, employs 33, including 11 in its e-commerce operation, [www.partspitstop.com](http://www.partspitstop.com). This site, which sells discount OEM parts, specializes in ATV, motorcycle, dirtbike, snowmobile, PWC, SxS and power equipment parts and accessories. The e-commerce business generates about 30 percent of the store's total revenue.

An important trend, says





ABOVE: Storefront at dusk. INSET: Digital advertising (photo courtesy Village Motorsports)

LEFT: Apparel department

CENTER: Service department techs Mickey Mann, Aaron Davidson (at bench), John Muns

RIGHT: Managers (left to right) Mike White, Brad Schroeder, Mike Embry, Patrick Luckey, Aaron Hulings (kneeling)

Schroeder, is that much of the dealership's snowmobile business has been replaced in recent years by SxS sales. "If you have less than eight inches of snow here, people ride SxS," he says.

The hottest product at Village Motorsports is the Polaris RZR. Nearby Silver Lake State Park is a popular riding spot on the shores of Lake Michigan; it includes a 450-acre off-road riding area and nearly 2,000 acres of sand dunes.

Schroeder chases the dirt market by sponsoring the SJO Village Motorsports Michigan State Fair Super Cross Series, a program of 20 races at county fairs that attract 4,000 to 5,000 for each event.

### 24/7 ACCESS TO SIGNAGE

Schroeder seems to be on the right track when it comes to using digital signage as a major marketing tool. Indeed, numbers picked up from various sources point to the effectiveness of digital signage.

Reports indicate that:

- 29 percent of digital signage viewers end up making an unplanned purchase.
- 47 percent recall learning about sales and specials from such displays.
- 42 percent of viewers say they prefer stores that have video screens.
- 42 percent of shoppers "sometimes" view screens they see in a store.
- 47 percent of viewers recall learning about products or specials from digital signage.
- Ads grab attention of 63 percent of people who viewed digital signs.
- 5.55 is the average number of digital signage impressions per person.

Just think, three out of 10 people who watch in-store video make a purchase they never planned to make. What if you could get 30 percent of your store visitors to make an impulse, high-margin PG&A purchase? How nice would that be?

Schroeder has three full-time staff members to handle all of the production and marketing for the organization's digital signage program and for its social media marketing efforts. Production is handled offsite, but it's controlled directly by the dealership's marketing team, not through an outside agency. This gives Schroeder 24/7 access to his monitors and to the outdoor boards when his time is available. The outdoor boards can be rented on an exclusive or part-time basis, and both are chosen, depending on seasonality and the dealerships' marketing needs.

The immediate access that Schroeder has to his monitors and to the outdoor boards



TOP PHOTO: Parts department associates John Highfield and Josh Marsh assist customers. BOTTOM PHOTO: Dallas Lane and Ashleigh Mathie in the showroom.

lets him post a message within an hour after he receives sales or product information.

"We can change by the hour," he says, "or we can produce specific messages for certain day parts. It's so flexible and so fresh. I can even post local high school football scores if I want to."

Of course, the outdoor boards aren't cheap. For example, to share four boards for 14 days, with four different messages changing every eight seconds, costs \$4,500 for the two weeks. However, OEMs help out with the

cost, says Schroeder, because much of the expense is co-op.

### BOWLING FOR CUSTOMERS

Village Motorsports has been owned by the same family, the Goodales, for more than 50 years. Two years ago, they purchased a bowling alley across the street from their 17,000 sq. ft. existing store, demolished much of the building and built a 50,000 sq. ft. store, featuring — yes, that's right — a bowling lane down the middle of the show floor.

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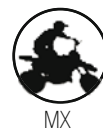


SCAN ME FOR MORE



INFORMATION

# 2013 OFF-ROAD



## GB520MXZ4 HEAVY DUTY

### GB520MXZ4

(And Non-Gold 520MXZ4)

HEAVY DUTY MOTOCROSS

MXZ4 is one of the lightest motocross chains available on the market today. Made for the professional motocross racer, GB520MXZ4 is the next generation of motocross racing chains featuring RK's new deeper gold sideplates. MXZ4 chains feature chromoly steel construction with seamless rollers and bushings, and oversized special alloy pins for added strength. All components are heat treated using RK's exclusive HIT (Heat Induction Transfer) process. MXZ4 has a maximum tensile strength rated at 9,000 foot pounds, weighs a mere 2.99 pounds for 100 links, and can handle any MX race application from 125 ~ 500cc.

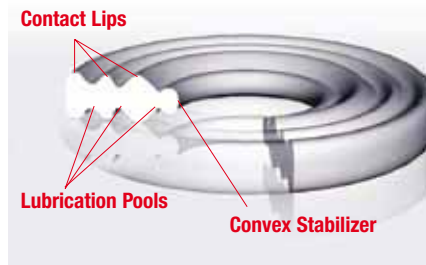


### MXZ4 IS NOW AVAILABLE IN COLORS



## GB520MXU UW-RING

UW-RING CUTAWAY



### GB520MXU

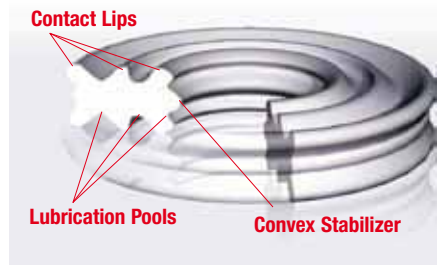
SEALED MOTOCROSS

Looking for longevity and performance? Check out RK's MXU chain. MXU is one of the lightest sealed-ring motocross chain available on the market today. Made for the professional motocross racer, GB520MXU is the next generation of motocross racing chains featuring RK's new UW-sealing rings. MXU's ultra thin UW seal is perfect for bikes with case clearance issues and the small seal contact virtually eliminates drag. MXU chain life expectancy is more than double when compared to a non-sealed chain. MXU chains are designed to provide the most consistent power delivery while increasing chain life. All components are heat treated using RK's exclusive HIT (Heat Induction Transfer) process. MXU has a maximum tensile strength rated at 9,000 foot pounds, weighs a mere 3.1 pounds for 100 links, and can handle any MX race application from 125 ~ 500cc.



## GB520EXW XW-RING

XW-RING CUTAWAY



### GB520EXW

(And Non-Gold 520EXW)

SEALED ATV & OFF-ROAD

GB520EXW is specifically designed for ATV/Quads and Off-Road vehicles and is the best high-speed, extreme heat, off-road performance chain available today. EXW chains were developed to survive the abrasive conditions that exist in hostile off-road environments. EXW features XW-ring seals composed of Nitrile Butadiene with three contact lips and two convex inner/outer stabilizers. This means three lubrication pools to protect against high-speed abrasion, and the loss of lubricant under extreme conditions. EXW is available in Gold or Non-Gold.



## MINI BIKE CHAINS

### GB420MXZ & GB428MXZ

(And Non-Gold 420MXZ & 428MXZ)

HEAVY DUTY MOTOCROSS

These lightweight gold racing chains were developed using the same advanced alloy materials and manufacturing technology as 520MXZ. Both 420 and 428MXZ racing chains are the lightest and strongest in their class, giving you the best value-performance rating of any motocross racing chain in the world today.



MXZ4 SERIES CHAINS	
520MXZ4 =	Non-Gold
GB520MXZ4 =	Gold
NB520MXZ4 =	Blue
ND520MXZ4 =	Orange
NM520MXZ4 =	Green
NR520MXZ4 =	Red
BP520MXZ4 =	Black





V-TWIN



GENERAL STREET



ROAD RACING &  
HIGH PERFORMANCE

# 2013 STREET

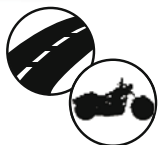


## GB520XSO, GB525XSO, & GB530XSOZ1

(Gold, Non Gold & Certain Colors XSO)

SEALED RX-RING SPORTBIKE CHAINS

Looking for an affordable, long lasting performance chain? Look no further, RK's XSO chains offer less torsional friction and increased high-stress, high-speed performance providing a longer lasting chain at an affordable price. All RX-Ring chains have "X" shaped seals and improved metallurgy giving you 7 times longer wearlife than standard O-ring chains. Viewed in cross-section, the RX-ring has two lubrication pools and contact lips versus the single contact design of a standard O-ring chain. Giving the chain a longer life gives you more value for your money.



## GB520GXW, GB525GXW, & GB530GXW

(Gold, Non-Gold and Certain Colors GXW)

SEALED XW-RING ROADRACING  
& SUPERBIKE CHAINS

RK's GXW series chains are the top of the line extreme performance chains. XW-ring chains are the best high-speed, extreme heat performance chains available today. The leading edge XW-ring seal is made of an advanced Nitrile Butadiene composite and features three contact lips and two convex inner/outer stabilizers. This means three lubrication pools to protect against high-speed abrasion, heat build up, torsional flex and the loss of lubricant under these extreme conditions. As a result GXW chains provide the user with 10 times longer wearlife compared to standard chains. GXW chain seals are compression and distortion resistant to provide the ultimate in rotating efficiency.



### XSO IS NOW AVAILABLE IN COLORS

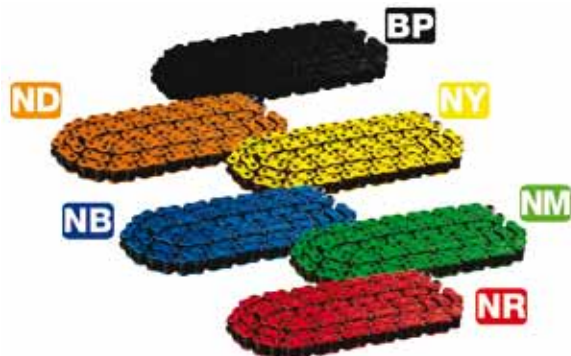


#### XSO SERIES COLORED CHAIN\*

520XSO = Non-Gold	530XSOZ1 = Non-Gold
GB520XSO = Gold	GB530XSOZ1 = Gold
NB520XSO = Blue	NB530XSOZ1 = Blue
NM520XSO = Green	NM530XSOZ1 = Green
NR520XSO = Red	NR530XSOZ1 = Red
NY520XSO = Yellow	NY530XSOZ1 = Yellow
BP520XSO = Black	BP530XSOZ1 = Black

\*Not all colors are available for each pitch series.

### GXW IS NOW AVAILABLE IN COLORS



#### GXW SERIES COLORED CHAIN\*

520GXW = Non-Gold	BP525GXW = Black
GB520GXW = Gold	GB525GXW = Gold
NB520GXW = Blue	530GXW = Non-Gold
ND520GXW = Orange	GB530GXW = Gold
NM520GXW = Green	NB530GXW = Blue
NR520GXW = Red	NM530GXW = Green
NY520GXW = Yellow	NR530GXW = Red
BP520GXW = Black	BP530GXW = Black

# 2013 RK CHAIN APPLICATIONS

RK Racing Chain	PIN LENGTH MM	PLATE THICKNESS		TENSILE LBS/FT	CLIP or RIVET	WEIGHT LBS/100 LINKS	MAX cc STREET / OFF-ROAD	Prices shown are for 120 links		
		INNER MM	OUTER MM					RETAIL PRICE*		
								GOLD	NON-GOLD	COLOR
<b>STANDARD</b>										
M420 RK-Malaysia	14.80	1.5	1.5	4,200	CLIP	1.60	80 / 80	-	\$ 13.73	-
M428 RK-Malaysia	16.85	1.5	1.5	4,500	CLIP	1.85	125 / 80	-	\$ 16.64	-
M520 RK-Malaysia	17.25	2.0	2.0	6,800	CLIP	3.28	250 / NA	-	\$ 30.16	-
M525 RK-Malaysia	18.70	2.0	2.0	6,800	CLIP	3.48	400 / NA	-	\$ 30.78	-
M530 RK-Malaysia	20.45	2.0	2.0	6,800	CLIP	3.71	400 / NA	-	\$ 31.41	-
<b>HEAVY DUTY</b>										
M415H mini bike chain	13.05	1.45	1.5	3,520	CLIP	1.47	NA / 50	-	\$ 13.73	-
GB415HR RS125 Race	13.65	1.45	1.5	4,800	CLIP	1.51	125 / NA	\$ 124.90	-	-
420MXZ & GB	15.70	1.8	1.45	5,000	CLIP	1.76	150 / 125	\$ 38.32	\$ 27.40	-
428MXZ & GB	17.60	1.8	1.8	5,800	CLIP	2.13	250 / 125	\$ 43.55	\$ 33.07	-
M428H RK-Malaysia	18.75	2.0	2.0	5,400	CLIP	2.26	200 / NA	-	\$ 19.79	-
520MXZ4 & GB	17.70	1.8	2.0	9,000	CLIP	2.99	NA / 500	\$ 104.83	\$ 87.07	\$ 120.17
M520H RK-Malaysia	18.80	2.3	2.3	7,700	CLIP	3.65	400 / NA	-	\$ 34.14	-
M525H RK-Malaysia	20.35	2.3	2.3	7,700	CLIP	3.85	500 / NA	-	\$ 34.53	-
M530H RK-Malaysia	22.00	2.3	2.3	7,700	CLIP	4.09	500 / NA	-	\$ 35.15	-
530KS	20.85	2.0	2.0	8,000	CLIP	3.75	600 / NA	-	\$ 81.25	-
530DR Drag Racing	23.35	2.6	2.4	10,400	CLIP	5.12	1500 Drag	-	\$ 148.93	-
<b>STANDARD O-Ring</b>										
420SO	17.05	1.45	1.45	4,420	CLIP	1.72	125 / 125	-	\$ 78.44	-
428SO	20.05	1.8	1.8	5,500	CLIP	2.26	250 / 200	-	\$ 86.42	-
520SO	19.90	2.0	2.0	7,700	CLIP	4.08	400 / 400	-	\$ 72.02	-
630SO	25.65	2.4	2.4	11,100	RIVET	6.50	1300 / NA	-	\$ 189.80	-
<b>PERFORMANCE RX-Ring</b>										
520XSO & GB	19.90	2.0	2.0	8,500	RIVET	3.36	750 / 750	\$ 124.15	\$ 108.03	\$ 138.03
525XSO & GB	22.85	2.4	2.3	8,850	RIVET	4.30	900 / 750	\$ 165.91	\$ 144.30	-
530XSOZ1 & GB	24.90	2.4	2.3	9,500	RIVET	4.48	1000 / 750	\$ 165.91	\$ 144.30	\$ 182.57
<b>PREMIUM XW-Ring</b>										
GB520MXU SX/MX	18.00	1.8	2.0	9,000	CLIP	3.10	NA / 500	\$ 124.15	-	-
520EXW & GB	20.80	2.0	2.0	8,500	CLIP	3.36	400 / 750	\$ 124.15	\$ 108.03	-
520GXW & GB	20.80	2.2	2.2	8,800	RIVET	3.75	1000 / 750	\$ 151.24	\$ 130.99	\$ 166.92
525GXW & GB	22.85	2.4	2.3	9,300	RIVET	4.30	1100 / 800	\$ 226.59	\$ 197.03	\$ 253.50
530GXW & GB	24.90	2.4	2.4	10,000	RIVET	4.63	1400 / 900	\$ 256.65	\$ 227.21	\$ 283.76
<b>GB = Gold Inner/Outer Plates</b> <b>40 Series Chain - 24.0 Links per foot</b> <b>50 Series Chain - 19.2 Links per foot</b> <b>60 Series Chain - 16.00 Links per foot</b>										
*Prices shown are for 120 links & are subject to change without notice.										

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The bowling lane (see photo, above) serves as a key feature for many of the events, especially for non-powersports-related community fundraisers.

"Who would think of a bowling alley down the middle of a powersports dealership?" asks Schroeder. "People love it. Local people are tickled that we used these resources. We reused everything that we could. The word on the street is, 'You have got to stop and visit Village; they have a bowling alley in the store.' Of course, that only brings them in; otherwise it's about the people here, the employees."

Schroeder's philosophy about staffing is simple, but a bit different than that of other dealers: "I would rather have the right people in the wrong building, than the wrong people in the right building. When you have a sincere passion for what you do and what you enjoy, that's important — that's not something you can teach. The fact of the matter is, customers buy people. If you are good enough (as a salesperson) people will follow you. People tend to be loyal to their salespeople.

"If I see a great waiter, I give him my card. I can teach people about powersports; that's easy. But I can't teach people about people."

Schroeder pushes the team approach. "Michael Jordan couldn't do it alone. Someone had to pass the ball to him. It's the same thing here," he says.

Schroeder has three siblings in the car business and understands the difference in dynamics are between the two types of purchases. "The auto business is a need-based business," he points out. "But this industry is a pleasure-based business. The dynamics are not confrontational [like car sales]. We help people pick out a toy they've wanted for years. Or we help them pick out their next toy. We help them get pleasure."

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Schroeder says nine out of 10 people who walk into his store are qualified buyers — they just have to get to the right monthly payment to close the deal. “It’s truly a lot easier to get a 19-year-old financed who is making nine bucks an hour and living at home,” he says. For that reason, “You can’t afford to ‘curb’ judge anyone. You can’t tell who can buy and who can’t buy just by looking at them, at their appearance, at their clothes.”

Schroeder rewards his sales staff for everything they sell: machines, PG&A, services, F&I, *everything*. “Salespeople want to know what’s in it for them. If a salesman doesn’t feel involved, he doesn’t walk the customer back to parts. Same with the extended service plan; he gets a part of that. You’ve got to have something in it for them. I compensate my sales staff for upselling.”

It seems to work. Many times, his back-end profit exceeds his front-end margin. Schroeder finances more than 70 percent of his unit sales, either through the local bank or financing plans set up through his OEMs.

#### UNIVERSAL RELIGION

Schroeder is a long-time Harley-Davidson guy who brings Harley marketing strategies

and tactics to the Village metric stores. While a student at the University of Wisconsin in 1990, Schroeder served an internship at the Milwaukee factory and worked with many Motor Co. district managers. He worked at Harley stores after graduation and moved to Village Motorsports three years ago.

From Day One, Schroeder adapted his Harley experience to start grabbing the low hanging fruit on the metric side. He immediately began running demos and events, and going to events where Harley riders were hanging out, places that one might think were exclusively Harley-Davidson.

“Many of these events look like Harley only,” says Schroeder, “but these people have disposable income. We’ve been able to sell them SxS and snowmobiles, even Victory. You don’t have to try to convert Buddhists into Catholics, so to speak, but they do have extra income and very seldom do they have only one toy.”

Schroeder leveraged his experience and Harley persona to bring the metric message to the Harley prospects. “I kind of got to be known as the Harley guy,” he says, “and that’s a cool factor among the Harley guys; there’s a transition of trust there.”

Led by Schroeder, Village representatives began showing up at historically traditional Harley events, such as the Blessing of the Bikes.

“It’s been an absolute boon for us. To me, we’re all bikers. You have to go out and meet them where they’re at; they’re very qualified leads. There are many doctors and lawyers at those events; the stereotype is gone. We’re all bikers under one umbrella, and that’s what we market,” Schroeder says.

It was a big change, and a good move for Village. “Nobody in the metric business was doing that when I got here. It totally replaced what we were doing,” he adds.

To Schroeder, the Harley involvement is pretty simple marketing.

“We went out and found customers. If you’re waiting for door turns, you’re not going to get it done in this competitive market. You can’t just go after the low hanging fruit.

“I don’t compete just against other metrics; I’m competing against cable TV, the Internet, cruises; we’re competing against anything that customers spend discretionary income on,” Schroeder continues. “Look. Some guys have a \$150 monthly cable bill. You have to convert that.” (continued, p. 36)

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## Dealer @ a Glance

# VILLAGE MOTORSPORTS

3700 Plainfield Ave, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
616-432-6262 • www.villagemotorsports.net

**Owner:** Jack Goodale  
**General Manager:** Brad Schroeder  
**Employees:** 33  
**Years in Business:** 50  
**Years at Location:** 2  
**Store Size:** 50,000 sq. ft.  
**Annual Revenues:** 14.6 million  
**DMS:** Lightspeed  
**Vehicle Franchises:** E-Ton, Honda, Hustler, Kawasaki, KTM, KYMCO, Polaris, Ski-Doo, Suzuki, Yamaha  
**Hours Of Operation:**  
Monday and Friday 9 am - 7 pm;  
Tuesday -Thursday 9 am - 6 pm;  
Saturday 9 am - 3 pm

**SALES DEPARTMENT**  
**Manager:** Mike White  
**F&I Manager:** Pat Lucky  
**Employees:** Todd Jaroh, Dallas Lane, Harley Parmenter  
**Showroom Size:** 15,000 sq. ft.

**PARTS DEPARTMENT**  
**Manager:** Mike Embry  
**Employees:** 5  
**Size:** 15,000 sq. ft.

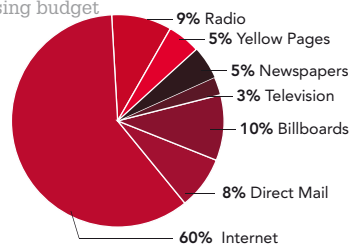
**ACCESSORIES DEPARTMENT**  
**Manager:** Brian Duffy  
**Employees:** 3  
**Size:** 10,000 sq. ft.

**SERVICE DEPARTMENT**  
**Manager:** Mike Embry  
**Technicians:** 5  
**Lifts:** 10  
**Size:** 10,000 sq. ft.  
**Shop Rate:** \$82/hour

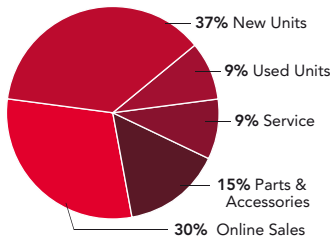
**E-COMMERCE DEPARTMENT**  
**Manager:** Aaron Hulings  
**Employees:** 11

**PLUS:**  
**Distributors:** Castle, Helmet House, Parts Unlimited, Tucker Rocky, WPS  
**Race Sponsorships:** 26 amateur motocross racers, GR Finest Stunt Bike Team  
**Community Involvement:** MDA, Gilda's House, March of Dimes and various bike rallies for local charities.

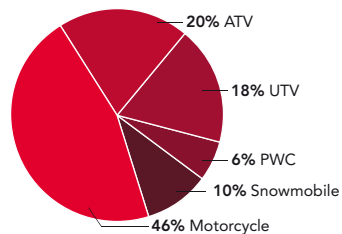
advertising budget



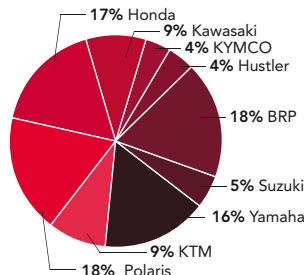
sales by department



sales by type



sales by brand



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BY JOE DELMONT

## COST CUTS INCREASE PROFITABILITY OVER JULY 2012

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**EVEN THOUGH TOTAL REVENUES** declined year-over-year through July at our Dealer LAB dealership, **Destination Powersports** of Punta Gorda, Fla., posted another positive earnings month by cutting total costs and total expenses enough to increase profitability by almost \$4,000 over July 2012.

In July, the dealership earned \$5,664 on total revenues of \$414,436. That compares with earnings of \$1,671 on total revenues of \$449,469 in July 2012. Total expenses were reduced by \$4,326, with savings in flooring and administration. Advertising costs climbed from \$930 to \$3,060 as the dealership spent heavily on eBay listings to sell a large inventory of Polaris parts that it had in stock for 18 months with no sales history.

"Polaris really pushes for the dealer to make large orders several times a year," says owner Bill Shenk, "and they tie money to those orders. For dealers without daily or weekly inventory control, it probably works. However, we prefer to check our inventory continually and replace items as they sell.

This ensures that our customers get the best possible service.

"What happens here is we have the inventory to support our marketplace continually. But if we don't place these large orders [with a Polaris-determined amount], we have to charge our customers approximately 15 percent more for the same items [i.e. the missed discount].

"It's a tough decision," Shenk continues. "Do we make Polaris happy and allow inventories to run out on many items so we can make the larger orders? Or do we say 'no' to the larger orders and have sufficient inventory on-hand all 12 months for our customers and charge 15 percent more?"

### WHOLESALE BUSINESS

Positive July earnings were also supported by the dealership's wholesale business. It earned \$1,745 compared to a loss of \$1,890 in July 2012. "Wholesale is fixing mistakes or moving product, like a car or truck taken on trade," says Shenk. "This was a

### Month-Over-Month Comparisons and YTD Totals: July 2013

SALES	% of Total Dollars			% of Total Dollars			% of Total Dollars			
	Jul-13	Dealer	Top Gun	Jul-12	Dealer	Jun-13	YTD 2012	YTD 2013	PVS	DLR
<b>Units Sold (New &amp; Used)</b>	<b>39</b>			<b>46</b>		<b>41</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>345</b>		
Sales	327,804	79.1	74	388,977	86.5	328,843	2,694,416	2,799,649	8,115	78.2
F&I (net)	20,762	5	4	17,023	3.8	22,668	123,675	136,012	394	3.8
Parts	21,605	5.2	7	13,932	3.1	28,340	176,088	198,607	576	5.5
Accessories	23,214	5.6	8	13,102	2.9	29,626	218,033	212,851	617	5.9
Service	21,051	5.1	7	16,435	3.7	34,643	172,006	231,900	672	6.5
<b>Total Sales</b>	<b>414,436</b>	<b>100*</b>	<b>100*</b>	<b>449,469</b>	<b>100*</b>	<b>444,120</b>	<b>3,384,218</b>	<b>3,579,019</b>	<b>10,374</b>	<b>100*</b>
<b>Total Cost of Sales</b>	<b>322,716</b>	<b>77.9</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>353,981</b>	<b>78.8</b>	<b>307,913</b>	<b>2,596,125</b>	<b>2,663,477</b>	<b>7,720</b>	<b>74.4</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>91,720</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>95,488</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>136,207</b>	<b>788,093</b>	<b>915,542</b>	<b>2,654</b>	<b>25.6</b>
EXPENSES	% of Dept. Gross Profit			% of Dept. Gross Profit			% of Dept. Gross Profit			
	Jul-13	Dealer	Top Gun	Jul-12	Dealer	Jun-13	YTD 2012	YTD 2013	PVS	DLR
Payroll										
<b>Total Sales (5.25/4.0 Empl)</b>	<b>18,685</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>24,333</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>26,360</b>	<b>164,787</b>	<b>186,344</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>34.5</b>
<b>Total P&amp;A (2.20/2.5 Empl)</b>	<b>6,986</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>5,284</b>	<b>56.9</b>	<b>9,987</b>	<b>52,072</b>	<b>64,183</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>40.5</b>
<b>Total Service (4.5/5 Empl)</b>	<b>16,581</b>	<b>78.8</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>10,116</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>21,021</b>	<b>109,091</b>	<b>142,517</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>61.5</b>
Flooring	4,448	8	9	7,106	9.9	8,768	46,662	58,596	170	10.9
Admin Payroll	7,881	8.6	6	7,671	8	6,084	48,475	51,445	149	5.6
Advertising	3,060	3.3	4	930	1	2,658	22,918	22,628	66	2.5
Administration	14,027	15.3	11	19,907	20.8	19,666	119,732	122,987	356	13.4
Rent	13,454	14.7	11	14,554	15.2	13,124	92,907	89,959	261	9.8
Co. insurance	2,679	2.9	2	2,226	2.3	2,516	14,839	25,336	73	2.8
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>87,801</b>	<b>95.7</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>92,127</b>	<b>96.5</b>	<b>110,184</b>	<b>671,483</b>	<b>763,995</b>	<b>2,214</b>	<b>83.4</b>
Misc. Expense	0	0	4			0		0	0	0
Additional Income	1,745	1	1	-1,690	0	2,321	-5,166	30,050	87	0.8
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>5,664</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1,671</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>28,344</b>	<b>111,444</b>	<b>181,597</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>5.1</b>
<b>Net Profit + Misc Exp</b>	<b>5,664</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>1,671</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>28,344</b>	<b>111,444</b>	<b>181,597</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>5.1</b>

Notes: Top Gun = The top performing dealerships in the PowerHouse training group. PVS = Per Vehicle Sold.  
\*Totals equal 100 because of rounding



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## “The team in the back is right at one year working together, and it continues to show in stronger sales.”

truck we took on a motorcycle that we were able to sell to a local auto dealer at profit.”

Year to date the dealership earned \$181,597 on total revenues of \$3.58 million, topping the earnings for the same seven-month period in 2012 by more than \$70,000.

Last year, the dealership earned \$111,444 through July on total revenues of \$3.38 million.

Unit sales were off in July, compared to the same month last year. The dealership sold 39 new and used units in July 2013, generating sales revenues of \$327,804, off from last year's performance of 46 units and revenues of \$388,977. In July, the dealership sold 19 bikes, down from 24 units in July 2012.

Shenk says that sales in Florida, according to state registrations, continue to be substantially below last year's level. “The report I have,” he notes, “shows Honda at 374 vs. 572 last year, Kawasaki at 150 vs. 282 last year, Suzuki at 155 vs. 275 last year, Yamaha at 226 vs. 296 last year, and Harley-Davidson at 878 vs. 1,424 last year.”

### OTHER DEPARTMENTS REV UP

Year to date the dealership's units sales are about flat with last year's: 345 new and used units, compared to 349 sold by July 2012. But sales revenues, as noted above, are up – and that may be attributable to the difference in new and used motorcycle sales.

July revenues in all other departments were up over 2012.

- F&I: \$20,762 from \$17,023 in 2012;
- Parts: \$21,605 versus \$13,932;
- Accessories: climbing to \$23,214 from \$13,102; and
- Service: jumping to \$21,051 from \$16,435 last year.

These strong performances helped generate a gross profit of \$91,720, off slightly from the \$95,488 posted in July 2012 but healthy nonetheless.

“The people made this work,” notes Shenk. “The team in the back is right at one year working together now, and it continues to show in stronger sales.”

Inventories were lighter this July at 224 units, down from 315 last year, resulting in lower flooring costs: \$4,448, down from \$7,106 last year. **D**

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The Dealer LAB project is a joint effort between Dealernews and PowerHouse Dealer Services, a consulting firm run by Bill Shenk, detailing his efforts to return a Florida powersports dealership renamed Destination Powersports to profitability. The financial information in this report is taken from the dealership's Composite Report supplied by Shenk and is prepared as part of the dealership's participation in the PowerHouse Dealer 20 Group. The Composite Report is produced from the store's monthly financial report. In preparing these Dealer LAB reports, Dealernews reviews the dealership's unaudited P&L statement and Balance Sheet and its Composite Report.*



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Long Beach Convention Center

**New York City** | December 13-15\*  
Jacob K. Javits Convention Center

**Michigan** | January 3-5  
Suburban Collection Showplace

**Washington, D.C.** | January 10-12  
Washington Convention Center

**Minneapolis** | January 17-19  
Minneapolis Convention Center

**Phoenix** | January 24-26\*\*  
University of Phoenix Stadium

**Ohio** | January 31 – February 2  
I-X Center

**Chicago** | February 7-9  
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**Seattle** | February 14-16\*  
Washington State Convention Center

\* New dates

\*\* New city

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# 15 things

## ... YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT ROYAL ENFIELD

By Mike Vaughan

**ALTHOUGH THE ROYAL ENFIELD** marque has changed hands a number of times, the brand itself has been in continuous production since 1901, making it the longest continually produced motorcycle brand in the world.

THE BULLET NAME first appeared on three bikes in 1932. The Bullet model debuted at the Earl's Court show in London in 1948 as a 1949 model of 350cc displacement. The company in 1952 introduced a 500cc version.

ROYAL ENFIELD WAS THE FIRST to introduce cush drive, internal oil tanks and neutral shift finders.

IT ALSO DESIGNED several motorcycles specifically for sidecar duty, and during both World Wars was contracted to build motorcycles for the British army, navy and other branches of the government.

WHILE INDIA, as part of the British Empire, was an existing export market, a closer relationship developed in 1954 when the Indian army ordered 800 350cc Bullets. The bikes had to be ready upon delivery for combat duty in the then-war with Pakistan.

SOON THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT decreed that a variety of products, including motorcycles, should be manufactured in India by Indians. In 1956 Royal Enfield and India's Madras Motor Co. signed a 49/51 partnership to produce motorcycles in India.

PRODUCTION IN INDIA STARTED in stages, with Royal Enfield initially shipping knockdown units that required assembly. The Madras factory soon began building and assembling frames and ancillary parts. In 1957 tooling for the Bullet was sold to what was then known as Enfield India.

BY THE MID '60s Royal Enfield was feeling the pinch caused by Japan's success in producing and selling reliable, inexpensive machines and thus shut the doors of the Redditch factory in 1967. The rights to the Royal Enfield big twins were sold to Mangane Bronze, who also owned the Norton Villiers Group. Afterwards the manufacturing rights passed through several hands, including the Rickman Brothers. British Royal Enfield's days ended in the early '70s.

ENFIELD INDIA soldiered on, producing the 350 cc Bullet. By 1977 Enfield India began exporting to England and other coun-

tries, and in 1984 started producing the 500cc Bullet.

IN 1990 EICHER MOTORS, a \$1.3 billion automotive concern in India, purchased a 26 percent and then a 60 percent share in Enfield India.

WHILE ROYAL ENFIELD ISN'T the largest volume motorcycle OE in India, it is immensely popular, and in the minds of Indian motorcyclists it holds an equivalent position as Harley-Davidson does in the U.S. Royal

vehicle needs in India and other emerging markets" but not involving two-wheeled vehicles. In September the *Indian Express* claimed that Polaris and Eicher Motors were contemplating a venture for two-wheel production. This arrangement would give Polaris an opportunity to compete with the likes of Harley-Davidson, KTM and Triumph, which have existing partnerships with Indian OEs that, among other things, allow them to avoid high Indian import duties. Accord-



Enfield is an aspirational brand, and waitlists of six to eight months are common.

THE TOTAL MARKET for motorcycles in India has surpassed China, with 14 million units sold in 2012. Currently Royal Enfield distributes motorcycles to 40 countries in Latin America, the UK, Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

DOMESTIC DEMAND for Royal Enfields consumes about 98 percent of production. A new factory, which came online this year, will allow Royal Enfield to increase production from 175,000 units in 2011 to 250,000 units for 2014.

IN 2012 POLARIS and Eicher Motors signed a \$50 million deal to "develop and market new products to meet the diverse

ing to the *Indian Times*, a spokesperson for Eicher Motors indicated that an old plant in Jaipur would be used for passenger vehicles but that a partnership involving two-wheelers was "speculative and hypothetical."

THE BULLET MODEL has been imported to the U.S. since 1995. In 1999 distribution was purchased by Classic Motorworks, which currently imports six versions of the 500 cc Bullet and, soon, the Continental GT500 (see page 16).

AND ONE MORE: Royal Enfield has about 100 U.S. dealerships and a fair amount of good open points. Dealers interested in the brand can contact Kevin Mahoney at 800-201-7472 or at [km@classicmotorworks.com](mailto:km@classicmotorworks.com) for information. **D**

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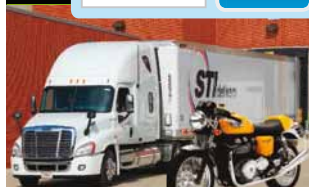
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# The Road Trip, Part 2

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**Mike Vaughan** can be reached at [editors@dealernews.com](mailto:editors@dealernews.com).

**MY CROSS-COUNTRY TRIP** is now over. It ended up covering 10,373 miles and 25 states, with 59 days on the road and involving one oil change, one new rear tire and tube, and one chain.

As would be expected, on the western half of the trip traffic densities were much less than in the East and South, even on the freeways, with the exception of the I-5 through California. The only close call I had was on Lyndale Avenue leaving **Ducati of Minneapolis** when a delivery truck driver decided he needed my lane so he could make a left at the next intersection, but the light quickly changed and no harm was done.

The weather for the most part was excellent, with most days being sunny and bright. I think I only hit rain six times, and only on three of those occasions did I need a rain suit. There was never any serious cold that couldn't be handled with a liner, a vest or a sweatshirt

under the jacket.

I have to confess that over the years my gear hasn't kept up with the latest and greatest technology. When I started to do some serious riding back in the '60s, about the only gar-

ments available were leather jackets. They were great for keeping the wind out and saving your hide if you hit the pavement, but not so good in dealing with rain and snow. You could, of course, buy a Barbour suit, and they were great for keeping you warm and dry, but not much good in a slide across the bricks.

At the time I didn't have the money and thus relied on a motley collection of skiing gear and war surplus items which I would layer on until I could barely move my arms. In retrospect, they didn't keep me very warm or dry, or provide any abrasion resistance. In those years, crashing was the furthest thing from my mind, so in reality abrasion resistance didn't make much difference to me. We're all six-foot tall and bulletproof when we're young.

In 1974 I went to work for Kawasaki. You'd think a motorcycle OE would have some road riding gear, but nope! If you rode off-road you had jerseys, pants with pads and gloves with little rubber protective strips. A chest protector and shoulder pads were available at a reasonable price from an aftermarket vendor.

For road riding, *nada*. No boots, no heavy jackets, no leather or fabric pants, no gloves. They did sell a

knockoff leather Members Only-type jacket, and a lot of us made that our primary road riding jacket.

For cold weather riding I added long johns and a snowmobile suit, and a pair of Fast Lane boots. In the mid-1980s I acquired a Rukka rain suit, a Firstgear leather jacket and a Widder electric vest, chaps and gloves. This gear lasted me through the '90s and it worked pretty well, but it was bulky to wear, bulky to pack and took about a half-hour to put on.

In 1998 I went to work for Triumph and, boy, did they have gear. Jackets in leather and fabric, and eventually mesh. Leather and fabric pants, gloves — you name it, Triumph had it, and I bought quite a bit of it. (Contrary to popular belief, at least with Kawasaki and Triumph, other than an occasional T-shirt or ball cap, nothing was free; employees bought it at dealer net.)

The Triumph gear was great, sturdy, functional, good looking but pretty single-minded. If you bought a fabric riding suit, it was waterproof or darn near so, and it would definitely keep you warm — and there hangs the problem. At the time, no fabric garment had vents. If things warmed up, you could take out the liner and unzip the front, but that was it. If you were wearing the pants, you just suffered or took them off.

## LOOK AT ME NOW

In 2003 I left Triumph and went to work for *Dealernews*, and I was no longer required to purchase only what my company made. I was free to buy anything I wanted, and what a world it was! All kinds of garments: vented, waterproof fabric jackets; vented leather in a multitude of styles; mesh pants; gloves for every climactic and functional occasion; high boots, low boots, and boots with fastening systems that required a manual to operate.

I was amazed!

For the cross-country trip this year I chose a Firstgear waterproof Kenya jacket and HT Air Overpants with the thought that these, along with a sweatshirt and heated vest, gloves, helmet and boots, would be all the riding gear I'd need. In the end I chickened out and also brought my rain suit, and I confess I did use it, though not on every rain occasion.

For the most part, the jacket and pants covered 90 percent of the riding conditions I encountered.

Modern gear is wonderful, light and functional over a large variation of weather conditions, and provides abrasion- and impact-resistance. When the weather went from cool to hot, I could unzip all the front facing vents while riding. When I stopped for gas or water, I could under-zip the rears. As the day would cool off, it was a simple matter of reversing the process.

As far as I'm concerned, there never was a "good old days" for motorcycle outerwear. The good days are now. **D**



## On the Web:

"The Road Trip, Part 1," can be found in the August issue of *Dealernews*. Access the ezine at [www.dealernews.com/dealernews/dealernews-digital-edition](http://www.dealernews.com/dealernews/dealernews-digital-edition) or download it for your iPad on iTunes.



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