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## Study: Consumers expect online reply in 30 minutes

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*Pied Piper releases first Internet study in five years*

In addition to the annual Prospect Satisfaction Index ratings, Pied Piper Management Company, LLC, also released its first Internet Lead Effectiveness (ILE) study since 2008. For that, the company tested 19 different criteria, related to which dealerships responded to online inquires within 24 hours.

"The way we approach this is exercise the same way the customer would approach this," Pied Piper president Fran O'Hagan said.

Pied Piper staff searched a brand and city in an Internet browser and picked the first one to appear each time. Then they looked at the inventory and followed the online directions for contacting the dealership to ask a specific question about a certain product. Each search was done mid-week, mid-day in local time, and a phone number was provided with each inquiry.



Fran O'Hagan

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The scores from five years ago improved. In 2008, only 30 percent of dealers responded within 24 hours, whereas in 2013, 72 percent did. The first response to an Internet inquiry was automated 56 percent of the time and personal 16 percent of time.

Suzuki dealerships ranked highest in the ILE study, followed by Triumph, Star, Ducati, BMW and Husqvarna. BMW, Star, Husqvarna, Suzuki and Ducati were most likely to answer the customer's specific question, while Harley-Davidson, Suzuki, Triumph, BMW and Victory dealers were most likely to attempt to contact the customer by phone.

Pied Piper found during its study that the time at which customers expect to hear back from a dealership has decreased from four hours in 2008 to 30 minutes in 2013.

"That the expectation for human interaction with a dealership has shrunk, so now all of a sudden it's very important that you respond quickly; it does make a difference," O'Hagan explained.

Though the motorcycle industry has yet to catch up to the auto industry in terms of ILE, the scores are improving at a similar rate. In 2008, auto dealers responded within 24 hours 64 percent of the time, and in 2013, they did 93 percent of the time. Fortunately for large auto dealerships, it's easier to solve this issue because of their increased staffing levels. But it's an important aspect for the motorcycle industry to address as well, O'Hagan said.

"Improving this part of the business immediately sells more product. It's not subtle; it's an easy-to-see reality, where it increases incremental sales," he reported.

The ILE study ran from September 2012 to April 2013, and it included 1,117 Internet inquiries nationwide.