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December 22, 2008: The truth behind Mr. Customer Service salesperson

Powersports Business
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Have you ever wondered how companies like the Ritz Carlton, Neiman Marcus and Nordstrom are able to provide superior service to their customers, day in and day out? The leaders of these companies understand the importance of "inspecting what they expect" both internally and externally. Let me explain.

An internal inspection for your dealership includes traffic log, DMS and financial data, which a lot of dealers already do. But another side is measuring your performance from an external source that's not caught in your "swirl." As the old saying goes, "You don't know what you don't know," and along those same lines, you can't see what you can't see. An external, fresh perspective of the actual experience you're providing to your prospects gives you the ability to uncover what you're unaware of that could be costing you sales.

This is where Pied Piper's Prospect Satisfaction Index (PSI) Evaluations come in. I've used the data from these evaluations as the basis for many of my articles over the last year. These evaluations begin with questions and notes about your facility, being welcomed to the dealership and how your inventory is displayed. Then, information about the salesperson is analyzed. For instance, did the salesperson introduce him or herself? Did they ask for your name and use it throughout the visit? And did the salesperson attempt to develop rapport and find common ground?

Questions are then asked about the salesperson's fact finding and interviewing abilities, like asking who and how the unit will be used, their product knowledge on the vehicle and ability to address features and benefits. Then, final selling skills are addressed. For instance, did the salesperson attempt to forward or close the sale in any way?

Believe it or not, Pied Piper's National Retail Benchmarking Study shows that salespeople in the powersports industry only ask for the sale 45 percent of the time! Yes, you read that correctly ... only 45 percent of the time. Dealerships that utilize PSI evaluations are usually surprised to learn they have salespeople that aren't asking for sale, and in most cases would have never known without externally "inspecting what they expect."

As I've studied PSI evaluations, I've identified a type of salesperson I like to call Mr. Customer Service. "Look! Out on the sales floor! He's able to answer any and all questions about the unit and go out of his way to make sure each and every customer is completely satisfied and taken care of."

The problem with Mr. Customer Service is he doesn't ask for the sale, attempt to set a future appointment or get follow-up information. I've worked with Mr. Customer Service in the past. He knows the products, can help out in parts and service when they're really busy and he appears to be Superman. But, he doesn't log all of his sales opportunities on the traffic log, which makes his weaknesses harder to exploit. On the surface, he's great and customers seem to love him. However, the data from PSI evaluations show that customers actually leave less satisfied when the salesperson doesn't ask for the sale. And this is costing many dealerships a ton of sales. As the great Wayne Gretzky says, "You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take."

So, the question is, do you have a professional sales team that is doing the most with every sales opportunity you have, or do you have Mr. Customer Service on your team who is letting your potential customers walk out the door and not asking for the sale? A professional sales team generates good gross for the dealership by making the most out of every single opportunity on the floor. Bad gross is spending \$10,000 in additional advertising to generate \$4,000 in additional gross profit.

It's nearly the beginning of the year. Now is the time to set your goals and make the adjustments to ensure you have a profitable year. By "inspecting what you expect" both internally and externally, you can maximize your profit ability in 2009.

Tory Hornsby, general manager of Dealership University, was drawn to the powersports industry

more than 10 years ago when he turned his passion for motorcycles into a career. Hornsby worked in nearly every position in the dealership before becoming a general manager. He welcomes your e-mail: thornsby@dealershipuniversity.com.

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