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As dealer principal, do you act like a CEO or a janitor?

Fran O'Hagan, President - Pied Piper Management Co.

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Back in 1985, I scraped together every last cent to buy a Kawasaki Ninja 600R from a dealer in Pennsylvania, Bill Peacock. I still remember Bill's business card to this day because below his name he had chosen for a

title, "Owner, Janitor." His point was that his dealership was a small, friendly, hands-on family business.

One of the sales process steps our company measures today is whether a sales customer is introduced to dealership management before leaving the store. For the motorcycle industry, this step is uncommon; happening less than 10 percent of the time when motorcycle sales customers visit dealerships nationwide.

If a motorcycle sales customer is not introduced to dealership management, maybe it is just because the general manager or dealer principal is too busy?

But really, what other activities are more important than saying hello — as owner or general manager — to a customer who has never before walked into the dealership? And today, how many new customers visit your dealership in a day? Is it asking too much for dealership management to spare five minutes for each of them before they leave? A side benefit is how these quick conversations allow dealership management to keep a finger on the sales pulse of the dealership. What is bringing customers into the dealership? Are salespeople always asking for the sale? What are the obstacles preventing purchase?

Back to Bill Peacock's business card and the question of CEO versus janitor. The answer is that the best dealership management is both "CEO" and "janitor." Steering the ship as CEO is critical of course, but the best dealership management is also accessible to new customers to help make every motorcycle shopper feel like they are the most important person to walk through the door.

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