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Do today's motorcycles provide an opportunity to sell more extended warranties?

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Stop and consider how much new technology is appearing on today's motorcycles. You know all about ABS brakes, maybe you have even ridden a motorcycle with traction control, but what about bikes with electronic suspension adjustment or a computer screen instead of separate instruments? Or ride by wire, or electronic quick-shift, or a plug-in GPS module to data-log laps around a racetrack? There are

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motorcycles for sale right now that offer all of that technology, and if the bikes you and your customers are riding today don't offer it, the bikes bought tomorrow will have it and more.

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Regardless of whether or not we like all this new motorcycle technology, it is already here, and maybe we can use it to our advantage. Ask your techs how their work changes when repairing these high-tech bikes. They will tell you about plugging the motorcycles into expensive machines that communicate directly from dealership to factory over the Internet. They will tell you about replacing whole components rather than repairing them.

In the end, maybe these high-tech bikes will prove to be bullet-proof, but meanwhile who wants to be the first to find out how much repairs cost when these bikes are no longer under warranty? Also, could uncertainty over future repairs hurt resale prices? Instead, some dealerships are seizing the opportunity to sell many more extended warranties (often officially "service contracts") to remove any fear of today's high technology turning into tomorrow's high repair bills.

Fran O'Hagan is president & CEO of Pied Piper Management Company LLC, a Monterey, Calif., company that works with motor vehicle manufacturers and dealers to maximize performance of dealer networks. One of Pied Piper's most popular services for the powersports industry is Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index (PSI) sales mystery shopping to help turn more motorcycle shoppers into motorcycle buyers.

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