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Study: Which motorcycle dealerships actually respond to customers?

Andy Greaser May 11, 2021



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What happens when motorcycle or UTV customers visit a dealer website and inquire about a vehicle? How does the dealership respond to the customer, and which brands have the best responses?

That's exactly what Pied Piper Management Company, a retail performance evaluator, set out to find when they sent "mystery shoppers" to inquire about vehicles for sale at 6,407 powersports

dealerships across the United States. Their [Internet Lead Effectiveness \(ILE\) Motorcycle/UTV Industry Study](#) has been conducted since 2011.

In each case, Pied Piper's mystery shoppers provided a customer name, e-mail address, and phone number, then waited for a response. Dealership responses were scored on a scale from 0-100 across a range of criteria. And the results?

Harley-Davidson dealerships had the best response rate for 2021. Indian wasn't far behind in second place, trailed by BMW and Polaris, with all four hovering around the 50 percent response mark. (While Polaris is the parent company of Indian, most dealers either focus on Polaris off-road products or Indian motorcycles.) Not only did Harley-Davidson, Indian, BMW, and Polaris lead in response quality, but they even replied within an hour 30 percent of the time. E-mails and texts were far more common than calls.

Keep in mind that these are averages. One dealership's outstanding rate may be outweighed by another's dismal performance. Also, remember that these figures include many multi-line and UTV dealerships. The figures presented here may differ somewhat if the UTV dealerships were removed to focus on purely moto-specific dealerships. Many of today's powersports dealers handle a range of powersports products and brands.

In contrast, "Honda, Kawasaki, Triumph or Yamaha dealers sent an e-mail or text answering a website customer's question only about 30 percent of the time on average in both 2019 and 2021," Pied Piper reports. That's no improvement over 2019's ILE study. Pied Piper notes that COVID-19 should have driven more traffic to dealership websites in the last year, but many missed the opportunity to strengthen their online resources and customer experiences.

The individual dealerships were scored out of 100 for overall response quality for another perspective. 44 percent of individual dealerships in the study scored below a 30, while a scant 17 percent managed 70 or more. Pied Piper considers scores below 30 to be "showing failure to personally respond in any way to their customers." Underperforming dealerships look to be far more common than good ones.

From the user experience side, most motorcycle dealer sites offered online trade-in values, but hardly any sites offered chat features (16 percent) or the ability to buy from home (just one percent, versus 25 percent in the automotive sector). It's hard to see these numbers as anything but a sad state of affairs.

So why are many dealerships flunking the test?

Fran O'Hagan, Pied Piper's president and CEO, observes that the dealerships' response to sales inquiries is simply too important to ignore. "Dealers who consistently respond to web customers by both e-mail and phone within 60 minutes sell 50 percent more units on average to the same quantity of web customers than dealers who typically fail to respond within 24 hours," she says.

There you have it. If you want to increase sales, respond promptly to customers when they ask about products.