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Propect Satisfaction Study Findings Harley-Davidson Salespeople Take Top Spot

Harley-Davidson dealerships ranked highest in the newly released 2008 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index U.S. Motorcycle Industry Study, which measures how consumers are treated when shopping in dealerships like yours. The independent study evaluated and benchmarked shopping experiences at 830 motorcycle dealerships nationwide, representing all major brands.

Following Harley-Davidson were Victory, Ducati, Buell and BMW above the industry average. Overall performance didn't change much from last year, but seven individual brands gained ground over the previous year including Ducati, Yamaha and Honda, while Triumph, KTM and Aprilia were among the eight brands with declining scores.

Harley-Davidson dealers maintained their top spot first awarded in the 2007 study, and despite retreating slightly from their 2007 record, Harley-Davidson still leads all motorcycle brands in more than 40% of the sales process factors evaluated by the study. Harley-Davidson salespeople top the list in asking for contact information, mentioning the availability of financing, asking for the sale and giving compelling reasons to buy now. Victory salespeople led all brands for mentioning features unique from the competition and for focusing attention on three to five memorable product features. Ducati salespeople ranked first for addressing features and benefits relevant to the prospect and for offering a test ride.

"While industry-wide motorcycle retail sales have been declining, there are brands and dealers who are bucking the trend and increasing their sales by measuring, benchmarking and then improving their dealership sales process," says Fran O'Hagan, president of Pied Piper Management Co., LLC. Many aspects of the typical motorcycle industry sales process offer opportunity for dealers and salespeople committed to improvement. For example, the 2008 study results show that motorcycle salespeople on average ask for contact information only 38% of the time, encourage shoppers to return only 44% of the time, ask for the sale only 45% of the time and provide compelling reasons to buy from their dealership only 34% of the time.

For the first time in this year's study, the Pied Piper group also measured shopper's experience contacting the dealership separately by telephone and by Internet or e-mail. Despite the knowledge that a majority of motorcycle shoppers now claim to research their motorcycle purchase online, dealerships were often slow to respond to online shopper inquiries. When dealerships were contacted by Internet or e-mail, 70% of the dealers from across all brands failed to respond in any way within 24 hours. Of those who did respond by e-mail, only 32% offered reasons to buy from their dealership and only 58% encouraged the shopper to visit their dealership. "History smiles on retailers who give the customer what they want, and there is no question that more and more motorcycle customers prefer Internet and e-mail communication," says O'Hagan, "But the most successful retailers will continue to be the ones who differentiate themselves in person and online in areas other than just price."



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