



Editor's Note

By Robin Hartfiel

THE OMNICHANNEL... YOU WILL BE ASSIMILATED!

As much as I try to steer clear of theme issues, they seem to have a way of taking over each production cycle. Last month's wall-to-wall coverage of the National Powersports Dealer Association standing on its own two wheels is a prime example of how that happens. This issue we seem to be back to banging the drum about "the omnichannel" taking over powersports. But should we be more worried about being assimilated or the Dealers' inability to assimilate into a new world order?

I just participated in back-to-back Zoom conferences, the first was how the "real world" is handling the pandemic-pushed paradigm shift (participants include everyone from a certain high-end women's undergarments manufacturer to WalMart — interestingly they are still addressing the shift to Text and SMS retail communications that Eric Anderson talked about last month). Juxtaposed with women's wear approach to the omnichannel was the MIC Communications Symposium. David Savlowitz and Michael Ponton were back to discuss the new challenges — and opportunities — ahead.

There may be new challenges, but this industry is still suffering from some of the same old problems. And like the Borg on *Star Trek*, you will be assimilated, or you will die... at least that is the message in the new Pied Piper

PSI Study. Founder Fran O'Hagan modified his annual survey to address the omnichannel this go round. While the findings are fascinating, the truly frightening thing Pied Piper unearthed was the fact that 6 out of 10 direct requests for UTVs (the hottest selling segment in the world, confirmed by Savlowitz & Ponton) are never followed up on at the Dealer level.

"What happens when motorcycle or UTV customers visit a dealer website and inquire about a vehicle," asks O'Hagan. The short answer to that question is "nothing" for 6 out of 10 incoming queries. "The biggest gaping omnichannel hole in powersports right now isn't weak websites, or missing website digital tools, or poor sales practices in-person at the dealership; although all of those areas will benefit a lot from improvement," he explains. "No, the powersports industry's gaping flesh wound is dealer failure to respond to web customer inquiries." All of the programs in the universe can't help the Dealer if they are not implemented.

The inability to understand and address the omnichannel has also been something that our staff Ph.D. Dr. Paul Leinberger, has been warning dealers in his monthly columns for the past three years. More recently Harley-Davidson CEO Jochen Zeitz pronounced the new LiveWire stand-alone brand signified the omnichannel was here. "LiveWire is the first OEM with a hybrid omni-channel model, combining the best of digital and physical, allowing the customer to interact with the brand on their own terms." The Motor Company's interpretation launches online at [LiveWire.com](https://www.livewire.com) and at 12 incoming LiveWire brand dealers in California, New York and Texas, with additional locations planned this fall.

It isn't just Harley heralding the new world order. The recent RumbleOn/RideNow mash up proves it is already here! We went in depth with the RumbleOn model back in March:

https://issuu.com/dealernews/docs/issue_3_march/32

And Dr. Leinberger addressed what the omnichannel means to your business here:

<https://www.dealernews.com/Home/post/what-does-omnichannel-really-mean-to-your-business/2021-06-08>

The good Doctor, David Savlowitz and Jochen Zeitz are much better visionaries of the future than me. However, I have watched enough reruns over the years to know that the guy in the red shirt always gets it in an episode of *Star Trek*! Don't be THAT guy! Time for you to boldly go outside your comfort zone and start assimilating the omnichannel into your business plan. 🚀

Former Editor-in-Chief and publisher of Dealernews circa 1990-2003, Robin returns to the magazine. In addition to having been instrumental in creating the Dealernews Top 100 program (still the industry's ultimate accolade for a motorcycle dealership), Hartfiel has worked for most of the B2B publications in the Powersports arena. Prior to the trade side, he worked as a beat reporter for a local newspaper and was an editor of publications ranging from All About Beer to VW Trends.