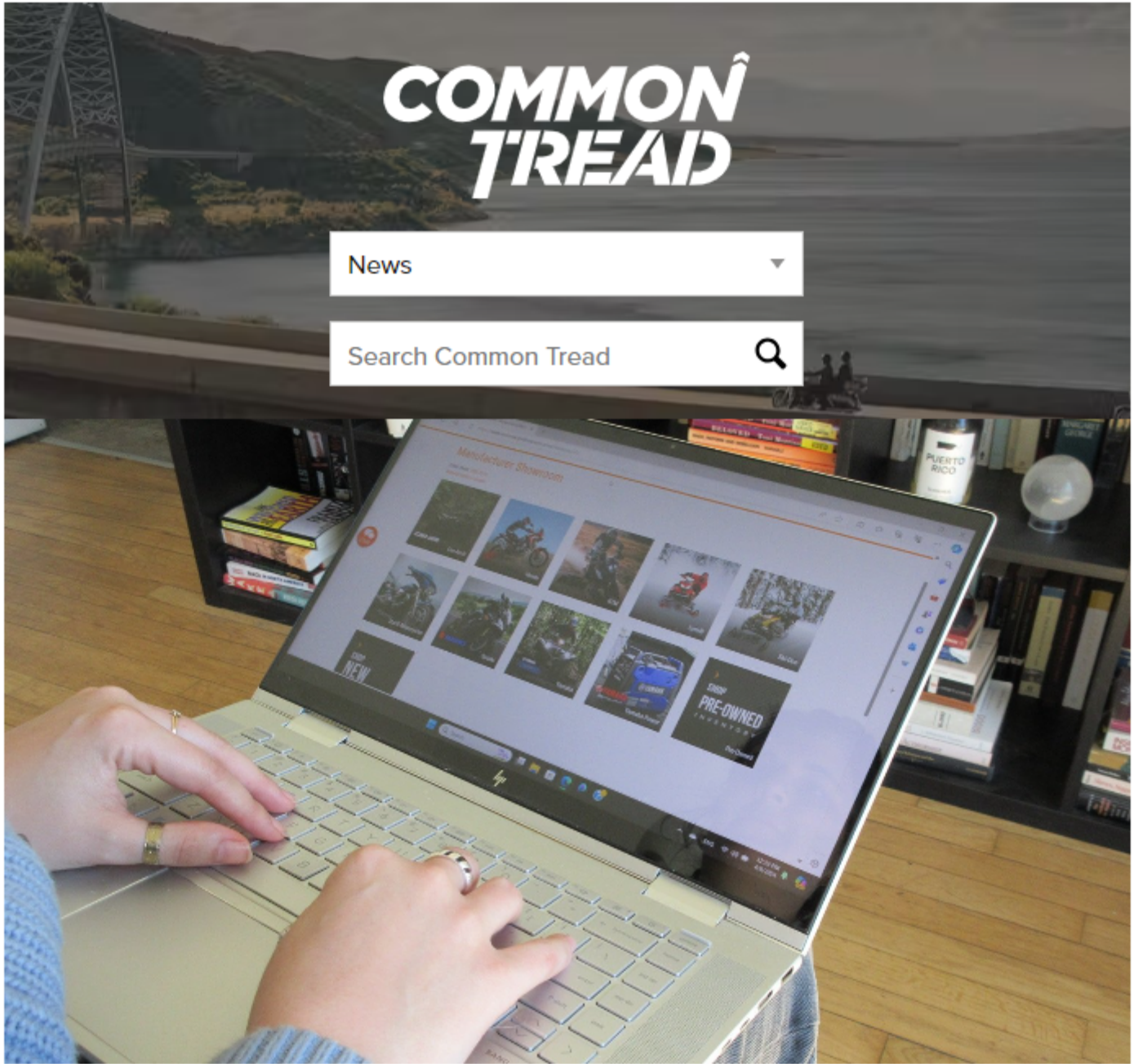




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## Study rates motorcycle dealers' response to customer inquiries

Lance Oliver Apr 10, 2024



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Comments

Say you're shopping for a new ride and, like most people in 2024, you're searching online. You spot a motorcycle that interests you at a dealership, fill out

the contact form on the dealer website with your e-mail address and phone number, and ask a question. What are the odds you'll get a response?

The most recent test by a California-based consulting group found that 43% of powersports dealers won't send a personalized response to your inquiry, while just 14% will respond quickly and thoroughly by more than one means — e-mail, phone call, or text message. That may not be a surprise to consumers who have had frustrating experiences with powersports dealers, but it does represent missed opportunities.

Those numbers come from Pied Piper Management Company, which has been conducting what it calls its Internet Lead Effectiveness (ILE) tests since 2011. In its most recent test, the company sent website inquiries to 3,718 powersports dealerships representing 27 different brands (included, in addition to motorcycles, were ATVs, watercraft, and even dealers who also sold landscaping equipment). The messages provided individualized contact information so that they would appear to be from a local customer.

Then Pied Piper measured how often the dealerships responded and whether they responded with an e-mail, a phone call, or a text message. They then ranked dealers on their 1-100 ILE scale. A score above 80 means the dealership provided "a quick and thorough personal response" by more than one channel. A score below 40 means the dealership did not provide a personalized response, though some of them provide automated responses.

"Three out of 10 powersports web customers today who inquire about a vehicle will be ghosted by the dealership," said Pied Piper CEO Fran O'Hagan. "Too often a dealership's response today is nothing, or only an auto-response, the modern equivalent of a form letter."

Pied Piper puts an emphasis on which brands' dealers score best. Just for the record, the dealers that scored 50 or above in the 2024 rankings were, in order, Indian (55), Harley-Davidson, Polaris Off-Road, Triumph, and BMW. Those are just averages, however, and you can still get poor service from an Indian dealer or good service from, for example, a Moto Guzzi dealer (average score 40).

I'm sure there's another side to the story, about dealership personnel who are frustrated by responding to inquiries that never lead anywhere, but hasn't that always been the case in sales? As we enter a time when dealer inventories are replenished after pandemic-related shortages and consumers are being pinched by inflation and higher interest rates, the real takeaway to me is that motorcycle dealers are facing a more competitive environment. This study shows they have room for improvement in communicating with potential customers in the ways they're used to communicating as we're a quarter of the way into

the 21st century.