

March 8, 2010: Patience is a virtue in customer service

Powersports Business
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A highly intense customer base and a laid back dealership out in the country turned out to be a great combination for Delano Sports Center, located about 40 minutes west of Minneapolis.

The dealership gets a lot of its customer base from the Twin Cities, says Tony Donahue, owner.

"The biggest thing with Ducati customers is that a vast majority of them are more knowledgeable than the average customer," he said. "They know every gadget. They want everything to be perfect. Being out here, everything is a little more country and laid back. We don't mind spending a lot of time with someone vs. if you were in a huge store in the Cities."

Time is the main factor in pleasing Ducati customers, whether it's on the sales floor or in the service department. Donahue says they spend a lot of time with their customers in both areas, which is one reason many people like to buy from the store.

On average, a Delano Sport Center salesman provides compelling reasons to buy from his dealership 67 percent of the time, according to the Pied Piper's Prospect Satisfaction Index. The average for a Ducati dealership is 48 percent. Even lower is the industry average at 34 percent.

The dealership's salesmen also excel in discussing features of the motorcycle that are unique from the competition. This is embedded in the dealership's staff as they do it 100 percent of the time. The average Ducati dealership does this 67 percent of the time, and again the industry fared worse at only 44 percent of the time.

Delano Sports Center's employees ensure the customer knows the benefits of the dealership and motorcycles all without rushing them to the checkout counter.

"We aren't pushy with them," said Donahue. "We're not a high-pressure selling atmosphere."

After a motorcycle is purchased, Delano Sports Center's mechanics get involved and do a thorough run through of the bike.

"We get our mechanics really involved," said Donahue. "The customers are pretty techy. Our main tech will spend on average a half hour to 40 minutes with the customer going over everything with them."

To help better serve its customers after a purchase, a few months ago the dealership combined the parts and service departments. Donahue says they originally made the change because of employee cutbacks, but the change has resulted in better communication and customer service.

"It saves us some payroll money, but in the long run, this is going to be a much better system," he said. "There seems to be a lot of communication between parts and service. Parts get back-ordered and maintenance doesn't get done, standard business stuff. If it's all one area, a lot of those communication dilemmas go away."

The dealership plans to keep the departments together even after the economy turns around.

And when that happens, and the floor traffic picks up again, Donahue says they'll continue to spend as much time as needed with their customers.

DELANO SPORT CENTER

Location: Delano, Minn.

Owner: Tony Donahue

PSI score:

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