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By **FRAN O'HAGAN - PRESIDENT, PIED PIPER MANAGEMENT CO.**

APRIL 24TH, 2009

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Retaining your customer: Assembly required



Remember when you were a kid and built model cars or airplanes? You spent hours carefully assembling your models, but then placed them on a shelf and didn't pay much attention to them afterward. Building the models was the fun part. Now consider an important ingredient to Harley-Davidson's survival 30 years ago: If you wanted to ride a Harley back then, you also had to regularly repair it, or even better, replace parts prone to failure with better aftermarket parts. The point is that owning a Harley involved a "relationship" with the motorcycle, rather than just a vehicle parked in the garage. Harley and their dealers astutely nurtured this relationship even when the motorcycles no longer had reliability problems, by providing thousands of choices of accessories to bolt onto a customer's bike. Like building models as a kid, owning a Harley-Davidson was an involving experience – a relationship – rather than just something to occasionally ride.

So what does this mean for dealerships today? A motorcycle parked in the garage gathering dust is the first step toward a customer deciding to sell their bike and spend their time doing something else instead. Savvy dealerships will help remind their existing customers why they enjoy owning and riding their motorcycles. They will give their customers a reason to care.

How often do your salespeople call existing customers to tell them about a new accessory or tempt them to come in and check out a new model? How often do they call to invite customers to come along on rides, or pass along details about an upcoming track day? If your dealership has already done the hard part, and sold a motorcycle to a new customer, take the next step and make sure your customer remains a rider, and remains your customer.