

APPAREL PRO: FULLFACE HELMETS

Recently, I was looking at full-face helmets at a local dealership. A variety of top brands were on hand, a range of price points was represented and there was even a mirror to check how the helmet looked... It was also one of the worst shopping experiences of my life! The utter lack of product knowledge the salesman had about features and the fitting of helmets was astonishing!

More than most consumers, I understand that very often people in dealerships have to wear many hats. But given the importance of a proper-fitting helmet and the profitability per square foot packed into full-face helmets, this is the one area of the showroom that shouldn't be left to "the new guy" to bumble his way through. High-end helmets are also an area where dealers clearly have the upper hand over the discount mail-order operations – you can't try on a helmet on a web page! Yet Helmet Fitting 101 is a class many dealerships are failing ... miserably!

"The fit of a helmet is a huge deal," said Steve Blakeney, marketing director at Sullivans, Inc. "It can be an entry-level helmet or a more expensive one, proper fit is the common denominator. In fact, fit becomes even more important on the lower cost helmets because your entry-level riders have a tendency to buy their helmets too big. It is critically important that you can properly fit them when they walk into your dealership. There is no substitute for properly trained and knowledgeable staff."

The graphics will always grab the newbies' attention, but fit and weight are the two most important features, graphics are a distant third, according to Blakeney. Take HJC's RPHA 11Pro line with its lightweight shell and wide range of sizes for example. The killer Marvel graphics are the icing on the cake.

When your customers start going out for track days or start racing, the stakes get even higher. Fit and weight have even more significance because they directly impact the rider's performance, not to mention the need for added safety. These helmets tend to be more expensive, and the track day customer is going to be better educated than the newbie swayed by a cool color scheme. Don't lose that sale by having inadequately trained staff.

"Because we sell HJC helmets and we sell Joe Rocket helmets – and we sell a lot of them – we go through a lot of training with all of our reps," adds Blakeney. "Our reps are very well trained so they're a great resource for the shops. We encourage shops to coordinate with their sales rep and get a little helmet seminar going. If anything, it's to the shop's advantage to have a properly trained staff," he concludes.

Bottom line: Brick-and-mortar shops that have properly trained staff are always going to have the advantage over the internet because of the need to fit a full-face lid. Do your parts people – or sales people or whoever is selling helmets – really have a good grasp on how to properly fit a helmet? Do they know the features and benefits of the brands your dealership stocks? For that matter, do you?

Don't leave high-end helmet sales to the new guy! There's really no excuse not to train everyone on staff. The road reps for nearly all the helmet brands offer free training for your personnel. It's a win-win for them and your staff's knowledge is a big part of why people are walking into your brick-and-mortar business rather than going the click-and-order route! ↙



Graphics like the Marvel helmets above are the icing on the cake. However, fit and weight are two of the most important features to point out to customers considering a full-face helmet.

