

APPAREL PRO: WOMENS APPAREL

For this month's women-focused issue, I interviewed Joanne Donn, founder of GearChic.com, and asked for her best advice helping dealers help their female customers. I met Joanne several years ago as she traveled with the Progressive International Motorcycle Shows and educated riders around the country about protective motorcycle apparel. Joanne is a fitment expert who works with all brands of apparel in a retail environment, and is my go-to gal for hands-on product information in a real-world environment.

Here is GearChic's advice on winning the apparel game for your female customers and fitting them well, because well-fitted apparel offers the most protection:

1) Understand that there are different body types for women and ideally dealers want an apparel floor that addresses the fit needs of all of them (or most of them). A good example is having a variety of brands like Olympia, Rev'it and Joe Rocket, which have three very different options for women.

2) Encourage women to step away from the mirror and sit on a motorcycle. Most of us are used to shopping in stores, which means standing in front of mirrors to assess fit, look and feel of the item. For riders, the motorcycle must be included in this part of the decision-making.

3) Talk to your brand representatives. Get their recommendations on what to stock and why, and get your apparel staff to understand as much as possible about their product lines. Each brand has a distinct fit profile that addresses certain body types.

4) Email your female customer base and ask them a few simple questions such as what kind of gear would they buy in the store? What brands do they like? How much do they budget for apparel?

5) Try to address each rider's specific fit needs or concerns. Common issues among women riders are needing more room for their hips/bottom (then sizing up increases the inseam or leg fitment) and needing more room in the bust (then sizing up, which increases sleeve length and/or torso length too much).

6) Always ask what kind of motorcycle(s) she rides and what kind of riding she is doing. Certain apparel works great on some bikes, but not on others.

7) Try to educate your customer as to why things are supposed to fit the way they do; many customers do not understand the point of ergonomic motorcycle fit when it comes to motorcycle gear. As we all know, gear fits nothing like casual clothing for a very good reason, and there's a reason why a jacket is difficult to zip over a woman's bust initially until she gets into a riding position. ↙



Above: Dealers who sell to women riders must understand that there are different body types for women, and ideally you want an apparel floor that addresses the fit needs of all of them (or most of them). A good example is having a variety of brands like Olympia, Rev'it and Joe Rocket, which have three very different options for women.

Below: Joanne Donn, founder of GearChic.com, is a fitment expert who works with all brands of apparel in a retail environment, and is the go-to gal for hands-on product information in a real-world environment.

